

Understanding how truth can be thought to involve a “fundamental falsification” (WP 512) and yet retain a kind of “regulative” function in the determination of the relative degrees of power implied by competing perspectives, and thus in the determination of problems themselves, would probably necessitate a close examination of the various philological strategies at play in the Nietzschean critique. But what about the inspiration Nietzsche derives from the consideration of the scientific methods at work in the natural sciences? How do these methods, originally designed to aim at truth, stand in relation to the process of selection and simplification (in short, falsification) in which knowledge essentially consist, at least according to Nietzsche’s linguistic (or should we say *criticist*)³⁴ paradigm? These are the non-frivolous tasks that await any further investigation of the Nietzschean philosophy of problems.

³⁴ See *Nachlass Herbst*, 9[48]: “If we are not sceptics then, should we say we are critics, or ‘criticists’?” The label does not suit Nietzsche any better than that of sceptic (even if he sometimes recommends a kind of “experimental scepticism”). It nevertheless underlines what the Nietzschean philosophy of science owes to the Kantian critique, under the form of a not-so-original theory of “regulative fictions” which is reminiscent of Vaihinger’s philosophy of *als ob* [as if].

Nietzsche’s Justification of the Will to Power

TSARINA DOYLE

1. Introduction

Much of the literature concerned with Nietzsche’s views on epistemology and metaphysics has focused on his perspectivism as a rejection of metaphysical realism and the God’s Eye View. It has been generally agreed that Nietzsche’s perspectivism rejects the metaphysical correspondence theory of truth in favour of an anti-foundationalist conception of knowledge. It has equally been agreed, at least amongst those commentators who wish to save Nietzsche from the clutches of metaphysical realism and the ontological and epistemological foundationalism that ensues from it, that the ontological doctrine of the will to power is a thorn in Nietzsche’s overall philosophical project. Commentators argue that the doctrine of the will to power either needs to be eliminated and discounted as untrue,¹ or, that it is to be understood as an example of Nietzsche’s philosophical wavering between a metaphysical and an anti-metaphysical position. Thus the view has been that the ontological doctrine of the will to power is incompatible with Nietzsche’s perspectival anti-foundationalist conception of knowledge. This consideration derives from the view that, if true, the ontological doctrine of the will to power represents a foundationalist doctrine and thus an extra-perspectival claim to knowledge. Few commentators, however, have attempted to read the ontological doctrine of the will to power as an important vehicle in Nietzsche’s overcoming of metaphysical realism and thus as working in tandem with his

¹ See George Stack, ‘Kant, Lange and Nietzsche’, in *Nietzsche and Modern German Thought*, ed. K. Ansell Pearson (London: Routledge, 1991), and Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

perspectivism.² This paper will examine the manner in which it can justifiably be said that Nietzsche's ontological doctrine of the will to power represents an overcoming of metaphysical realism. In so doing, the paper will explore the manner in which the doctrine of the will to power is compatible with Nietzsche's perspectivism to the extent that it can be said that the former derives from the latter. This inquiry will restrict its focus to Nietzsche's *justification* of the ontological doctrine of the will to power rather than examine the content of the ontology itself. Thus my main concern will be with the manner in which Nietzsche arrives at the ontological doctrine of the will to power and not with an analysis of his ontological theory of forces. This will involve recognition of Nietzsche's two main interests in proposing the doctrine of the will to power. The first is his concern with philosophical method. The second is his proposal of an ontological theory of forces. The permitted scope of the present line of inquiry permits us only to examine the first interest. With this in mind we will embark upon our exploration by setting up the problematic of metaphysical realism and the requirements that Nietzsche must meet if he is to properly overcome it. It is to this problematic that we now turn.

2. Metaphysical Realism

Metaphysical realism for Nietzsche assumes either a cognitivist or a non-cognitivist guise. The cognitivist maintains that reality as it is in itself is cognitively accessible to us whilst the non-cognitivist denies this possibility. The cognitivist metaphysical realist fails to see that the given, as an appeal to a foundationalist conception of justification, is in fact a myth. Thus the cognitivist holds that the justification of our epistemic claims resides in "confrontations" with the world. Metaphysical realism is, in this sense, a form of criteriological realism. This type of realism maintains that "the correctness of a representing or system of representings consists in its *adequacy* to a world (i.e., to that

² John Richardson attempts to demonstrate the importance of the doctrine of the will to power in relation to Nietzsche's perspectivism. However, Richardson sees the doctrine of the will to power as preceding and grounding Nietzsche's perspectivism. The difficulty with such an approach, however, is that it fails to show how Nietzsche arrived at the doctrine and in so doing, it appears as an unjustified foundationalist thesis. See John Richardson, *Nietzsche's System* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

which it represents)".³ The distinguishing feature of this type of realist lies in the view that "adequacy to the world is the *criterion* of correctness for our representings."⁴ The issue of correctness is determined from "outside" our internal perspectival practices of justification. The metaphysical realist considers the world to be radically independent of theory and thus only captured adequately from an extra-perspectival God's Eye View. However, this account of justification ultimately collapses with the demise of the viability of the God's Eye View. This conception of knowledge maintains that justification is extra-perspectival and extra-conceptual. This is, as John McDowell points out, an incoherent position. McDowell states:

The idea of the Given is the idea that the space of reasons, the space of justification or warrants, extends more widely than the conceptual sphere. The extra extent of the space of reasons is supposed to allow it to incorporate non-conceptual impacts from outside the realm of thought. But we cannot really understand the relations in virtue of which a judgement is warranted except as relations within the space of concepts: relations such as implication or probabilification, which hold between potential exercises of conceptual capacities. The attempt to extend the scope of justificatory relations outside the conceptual sphere cannot do what it is supposed to do.⁵

The non-cognitivist metaphysical realist wavers between the conflicting desires to posit a realist constraint to our epistemic claims and to avoid the incoherency of criteriological realism. In response to this difficulty, the non-cognitivist adopts a theory-internal conception of justification in place of the extra-perspectival conception put forth by the cognitivist metaphysical realist. In so doing, however, the non-cognitivist is faced with the dilemma of how our internal practices of justification capture the world. The problem is then how one avoids confinement within one's conceptual scheme. Kant, who in Nietzsche's view is a non-cognitivist metaphysical realist, attempts to escape such confinement by holding on to the given in the form of the thing-in-itself. In this way

³ J. F. Rosenberg, *One World and Our Knowledge of It: The Problem of Realism in Post-Kantian Perspective* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1980), p. 89.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 113.

⁵ J. McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), p. 7.

Kant attempts to retain an element of constraint from a realist core. Thus Kant is unwilling to take the idealist route in response to the dilemma. He attempts to retain a realist constraint without appealing to the God's Eye View conception of justification by positing the thing-in-itself as an object of thought rather than as an object of knowledge. He states:

though we cannot *know* these objects as things in themselves, we must yet be in position at least to *think* them as things in themselves; *otherwise we should be landed in the absurd conclusion that there can be appearance without anything that appears.*⁶

However, in Nietzsche's view, Kant's attempts to retain a realist constraint ultimately fail because the thing-in-itself is both ineffable and uncognizable. As such it lacks any power to act as a constraint. Nietzsche states:

stricter logicians, after they had rigorously established the concept of the metaphysical as the concept of the unconditioned and consequently unconditioning, denied any connection between the unconditioned (the metaphysical world) and the world we are familiar with. *So that the thing-in-itself does not appear in the world of appearances*, and any conclusion about the former on the basis of the latter must be rejected.⁷

Thus Nietzsche maintains that the non-cognitivist form of metaphysical realism operates within an appearance-reality distinction that distinguishes how objects are for us from how they are in themselves. This distinction represents an oscillation between a criteriological/metaphysical realist response and an idealist response to the problem of the compatibility of maintaining a realist constraint whilst adopting a theory-internal conception of justification. This oscillation can be detected in Kant's retention of the unknowable thing-in-itself as an attempt to ward off idealism. However, Kant inadvertently leans towards idealism when he claims that the unknowable thing-in-

⁶ Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, translated by Norman Kemp Smith (London: Macmillan Education Company, 1990), Preface to Second edition Bxxvi. p. 27 [my italics].

⁷ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human-All-Too-Human*, translated by Marion Faber and Stephen Lehmann (London: Penguin, 1994), 16 [my italics]. Hereafter cited as HAH.

itself can only be defined negatively (that is, as non-temporal and non-spatial). This suggests that the world as it is independently of the conditions of our knowledge (conceptual imposition) is ontologically indeterminate. The world is only rendered determinate and given a positive definition when we impose concepts and a spatio-temporal setting. In this way it can be said of the Kantian metaphysical realist that "to a degree we *create* the world we live in."⁸ Thus the thing-in-itself is deemed to be an indeterminate thing that can be ontologically carved up in multiple ways. Hilary Putnam captures this aspect of metaphysical realism when he states:

Now, the classical metaphysical realist way of dealing with such problems is well known. It is to say that there is a single world (think of it as a piece of dough) which we can slice into pieces in different ways.⁹

Nietzsche suggests that Kant's idealist leanings, coupled with the failure of the thing-in-itself to provide the sought-after realist constraint, deliver the non-cognitivist metaphysical realist into the hands of the radical sceptic — whereby as knowers we are confined within our internal practices of justification.¹⁰ This confinement leaves open the possibility that our knowledge may differ radically from how the world is, unbeknownst to us, in itself.¹¹ In turn this sceptical possibility reinstates the criteriological realists' "Myth of the Mind Apart". Rosenberg articulates this myth when he states

The Myth is a polymorphic one, but its central element is the supposition that the world is a thing which is ontologically alien

⁸ Michael Devitt, *Realism and Truth* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 60.

⁹ Hilary Putnam, *The Many Faces Of Realism* (LeSalle, Illinois: Open Court, 1987), p. 19. Hereafter cited as MFR.

¹⁰ Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, translated by Duncan Large (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 4. "How the True World Finally became a Fable", section 3. Hereafter cited as *Twilight*.

¹¹ This sceptical possibility is articulated by Kant himself when he says that a non-sensible intuition of the noumenal world (as the thought of the thing-in-itself) would constitute "a field *quite different* from that of the senses [...] a world which is thought as it were in the spirit (or even perhaps intuited) and which would therefore be for the understanding a far nobler, not a less noble, object of contemplation" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A250 p. 269 [my italics]).

to us as we are, to us as representers and as knowers — a thing which stands somehow outside us, and which challenges us to bring the inner life of our thinkings into harmony with it.¹²

From this we can see that Kant is caught in the dilemma that he can retain a realist constraint only by accepting the foundationalist (dogmatist) implications of the given. Similarly, he can avoid the incoherence of the appeal to the given only by relinquishing a realist constraint and adopting a form of sceptical idealism.

In what follows I will argue that Nietzsche rejects both the cognitive and non-cognitive forms of metaphysical realism by attempting to overcome the sceptical implications of Kant's idealist leanings without succumbing to the temptation to "recoil back into appealing to the Given".¹³ He aims to overcome the sceptical idealist position that he attributes to Kant by rejecting the appearance-reality distinction. In so doing, he argues that our perspectives are perspectives on the world rather than being constitutive of the world. Thus, he claims that our perspectives capture the world in some adequate sense. He states

There is no question of "subject" and "object," but of a particular species of animal that can prosper only through a certain *relative rightness*; above all, regularity of its perceptions (so that it can accumulate experience) [...] The meaning of "knowledge": here, as in the case of "good" or "beautiful," the concept is to be regarded in a strict and narrow anthropomorphic and biological sense. In order for a particular species to maintain itself and increase its power, its conception of reality must comprehend enough of the calculable and constant for it to base a scheme of behaviour on it. The utility of preservation — not some abstract-theoretical need not to be deceived — stands as the motive behind the development of the organs of knowledge — they develop in such a way that their observations suffice for our preservation. In other words: the measure of the desire for knowledge depends upon the measure to which the will to power grows in a species: a species *grasps a certain amount of reality* in order to become master of it, in order to press it into service.¹⁴

¹² Rosenberg, *One World and Our Knowledge of It*, p. 189.

¹³ McDowell, *Mind and World*, p. 9.

¹⁴ Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, translated by Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 480 (1888) [my italics]. Hereafter cited as WP.

However, if Nietzsche's rejection of metaphysical realism in both its cognitive and non-cognitive guises is to be successful, his conception of adequacy must be achieved without appeals to the criteriological realist's extra-perspectival conception of justification. If he is to succeed in this then he must fulfill two tasks. Firstly, he must avoid the charge that our internal practices of justification are cut off from the world. This requires that he overcome the non-cognitive metaphysical realist's uncognizable and ineffable conception of world. Secondly, he must show that the world plays a role in constraining our epistemic claims to the extent that it can be said that the world features in our appearances. The satisfaction of both demands requires that Nietzsche adopt a form of realism that is compatible with his rejection of metaphysical realism. He achieves the first task by conceiving the world as theory-dependent. In other words, the world cannot denote for Nietzsche a theory-independent thing-in-itself, but rather, it must be grasped under some description or other. In so doing, Nietzsche can avoid the metaphysical realist idea that there is an Archimedean point "or a use of 'exist' inherent in the world itself"¹⁵ independently of our choice of theory or description. We will see that Nietzsche succeeds in fulfilling the second task, and thus in securing a realist constraint, by positing the ontological doctrine of the will to power as a perspectivist absolute truth. This maintains that questions of "adequacy" to the world are worked out from "within" a conceptual scheme rather than from an extra-perspectival position. Nietzsche prioritizes epistemology over ontology to the extent that, properly speaking, questions of adequacy to the world are, contrary to the metaphysical realist, questions of correctness.¹⁶ By this we mean that questions of adequacy are not determined by extra-conceptual or extra-perspectival "encounters" with the world, but rather, that the correctness and truth of a statement is determined by justification.¹⁷ In this way Nietzsche can retain the notion of adequacy without commitment to any form of givenness or foundationalism.¹⁸ With this in mind let us now direct ourselves to Nietzsche's justification for the doctrine of the will to power.

¹⁵ Putnam, MFR, p. 20.

¹⁶ See Rosenberg, *One World and Our Knowledge of It*, p. 114.

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 117.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 115.

3. The Justification of the Will to Power

In this section I will argue that Nietzsche arrives at the ontological doctrine of the will to power from the point of view of what we can know and justify rather than from a desire to articulate a fundamental ontology. Thus, I will concur with Lanier Anderson who describes Nietzsche's ontological doctrine of the will to power as a derivative ontology. My examination here has two principal aims. Firstly, I want to determine that Nietzsche gives priority to the epistemic doctrine of the will to power. This will involve an examination of Nietzsche's claims with regard to the issue of philosophical method. Secondly, I will test the extent to which Nietzsche's reflections on method curb any pretensions to extra-perspectival conceptions of justification and truth. In so doing, I am concerned to establish the thesis that for Nietzsche epistemology is prior to ontology to the extent that ontological claims must be justified within the parameters of our perspectival manner of justification. Furthermore I want to demonstrate that this allows Nietzsche to maintain a realist constraint. This realist constraint consists in the idea that there is one world to which our epistemic claims are more or less adequate.¹⁹ Rosenberg captures this idea when he states:

We remain free, in other words, to hold *both* that the correctness of our representings does not consist in their adequacy to the world *and* that, nevertheless, our representings are correct if and only if they are adequate to the world.²⁰

¹⁹ It may be argued that there is a multiplicity of perspectives and thus that justification is relative to a particular perspective or conceptual scheme. However, this relativity claim does not cater for discovery and conceptual change. By maintaining that justification is "relative" to a perspective I maintain that there is no qualitative difference between perspectives. Thus I put forth the view that no one perspective is better or more correct than any other. However, it would seem that Nietzsche thinks that some interpretations are better than others. Nietzsche thus claims that his own affirmative philosophy is better than the philosophy of resentment that it replaces. Thus he sees his own philosophy as an improvement and rejection of Christianity and Platonism. Furthermore, Nietzsche maintains that each interpretation emerges from a predecessor. It is for this reason that he calls for the "purification" (GS. 335) of values and not their replacement as such. The idea of better or worse perspectives carries with it the implication that there is "one" world to which these interpretations are more adequate.

²⁰ Rosenberg, *One World and Our Knowledge of It*, p. 113.

I will achieve this aim by demonstrating the manner in which the ontological doctrine of the will to power is most properly understood as a perspectivist absolute truth in the sense of something that is true in all perspectives rather than true outside all perspectives. The ultimate hallmark of such an absolute truth will be its "coherent" character or the extent to which it is responsible for the diachronic synthesis of our individual beliefs. Rosenberg articulates this character of perspectival absolute truth when he says:

to make sense of the realist view that there is only one world [...] we need something more than all those time-bound, "internal", synchronic "correctnesses" which appertain to representings successively as they are elements of successive conceptual schemes. We need also an *absolute* sense of "correctness" — a sense in which an entire *system* of representations can, *as a whole*, be said to be correct or incorrect.²¹

In this way we will see that Nietzsche can uphold his internal realist thesis that justification and truth are not determined by "confrontations" with the world in the manner of criteriological realism whilst simultaneously maintaining a realist constraint. Thus it will be seen that Nietzsche can overcome the Kantian oscillation between criteriological realism and sceptical idealism and consequently that he succeeds in overcoming both the cognitive and non-cognitive forms of metaphysical realism. We will proceed, then, by turning to Nietzsche's articulation of the epistemic version of the will to power.

In order to achieve our aims we will return to *Beyond Good and Evil*, section 36, where Nietzsche articulates the ontological doctrine of the will to power. Here Nietzsche introduces the doctrine as an experiment in method. The experiment centres around the question of whether we can posit the will to power as a fundamental explanatory principle. Nietzsche is here making a plea for the principle of explanatory economy. He states:

"Assuming, finally, that we could *explain* [my italics] our entire instinctual life as the development and differentiation of *one* basic form of the will (namely the will to power, as *my* tenet would have it); assuming that one could derive all organic functions from this will to power and also find in it the solution to the problem of procreation and

²¹ Ibid.

alimentation (it is all one problem), then we would have won the right to designate *all* effective energy unequivocally as: *the will to power*.²²

Nietzsche maintains that his experiment regarding economy of principles is demanded by the conscience of philosophical method. He argues:

In the end, we are not only allowed to perform such an experiment, we are commanded to do so by the conscience of our *method*. We must not assume that there are several sorts of causality until we have tested the possibility that one alone will suffice, tested it to its furthest limits (to the point of nonsense, if you'll allow me to say so).²³

BGE 36 presents the will to power as both an ontological and epistemological thesis. That is, the will to power is concerned to articulate both a theory of knowledge and an ontological doctrine of forces. However, Nietzsche gives priority to the epistemic thesis. He states that the "most valuable insights have arrived at last; but the most valuable insights are *methods*".²⁴ His concern with the question of method centres around the manner in which we justify our truth claims. Nietzsche's conception of an absolute truth that is true in all perspectives rather than an extra-perspectival truth that is true outside all perspectives is reflected in his conception of the will to power as the methodological unity of both the natural and the human sciences. That Nietzsche is concerned to establish such an explanatory principle that unifies both the human and the natural sciences can be seen from *Human-All-Too-Human* where he maintains that

Historical philosophy [...] the very youngest of all philosophical methods [...] can no longer be even conceived of as separate from the natural sciences [...].²⁵

His notion of philology as the "art of reading well" also expresses this concern with method. This art of reading well, according to Nietzsche, contains "the presupposition for the tradition of culture, for the unity of

²² Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, translated by Marion Faber (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 36. Hereafter cited as BGE.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Nietzsche, WP, 469 (1888).

²⁵ Nietzsche, HAH, 1.

science".²⁶ With regard to Nietzsche's understanding of science, Lanier Anderson points out that

Nietzsche's intellectual climate [...] had a richer conception of science than we do – one which included the human sciences, or *Geisteswissenschaften*, as well as the natural sciences.²⁷

As a doctrine of the unity of science, Lanier Anderson argues that the will to power is "a view about our way of knowing the world".²⁸ Nietzsche's emphasis on method is an important element in his rejection of foundationalism and in his proposal of an anti-foundationalist epistemology that is compatible with ontological truth.²⁹ Lanier Anderson captures Nietzsche's perspectivist anti-foundationalist concerns when he states that Nietzsche

wants to replace the traditional, ontological conception of the unity of science with a *methodological* and interpretive conception. For Nietzsche, the unity of the sciences is not located in their reducibility to a common set of laws, or in the composition of their objects from a common 'stuff', e.g., matter, but rather in a unity of *method* which allows them to be interpreted as a coherent whole.³⁰

Nietzsche's methodology introduces two constraints that ensure that all warranted truth claims will be articulated within the confines of theory. The first constraint is the methodological demand for economy of principles. Nietzsche warns us in BGE 13 that "the dictates of our method [...] demand that we be frugal with our principles". The second constraint is an empiricist demand. Schacht articulates this demand as follows:

²⁶ Nietzsche, *The AntiChrist*, translated by R.J. Hollingdale, (London: Penguin, 1990), 59. Hereafter cited as AC.

²⁷ Lanier Anderson, "Nietzsche's Will to Power as a Doctrine of the Unity of Science" in *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 25, 5 (October 1994), pp. 729-50, p. 745.

²⁸ Ibid., p. 731.

²⁹ John Richardson argues that Nietzsche's power ontology "stands prior to this perspectivism as (something like) its objective precondition" (Richardson, p. 35). However, this view takes little account of Nietzsche's concern with method and the manner in which we justify our epistemic claims.

³⁰ Lanier Anderson, op. cit., p. 733.

It consists in the idea that the meaningfulness and hence the legitimacy of such notions is established only upon the identification of something within the realm of actual experience [...].³¹

It is important to note here that Nietzsche is not a foundationalist empiricist to the extent that his perspectivism precludes the possibility of appealing to uninterpreted self-justifying empirical facts. We can however explain Nietzsche's empiricist constraint by appealing to his doctrine of the unity of science. Lanier Anderson captures this notion of an empirical demand when he states that our theories are constrained by the data of the various sciences. He states that the results of the various sciences act "as *data* for any proposed account of the unity of science, and such accounts must be evaluated as interpretations of these data".³² Thus it seems that the results of the various sciences act as some form of empirical constraint. According to Lanier Anderson the data of the various sciences are given priority over the theory of the will to power.

If some science gives rise to well-supported theories which cannot be understood in terms of the will to power, the proper response would *not* be to throw out the scientific results. On the contrary, we would be forced to admit failure in our attempt to unify the sciences under Nietzsche's doctrine. We would then try to find some other unifying principle, or, if things seemed sufficiently hopeless, give up the pursuit of ultimate explanatory economy.³³

By introducing the notion of empirical constraint Nietzsche disallows *a priori* metaphysical speculation. It seems that we are now in a position to explain Nietzsche's description of the will to power as "The world viewed *from inside*, [my italics] the world defined and determined according to its "intelligible character" – it would be "will to power" and nothing else".³⁴ Although this passage has frequently been cited in support of the reading of the will to power as a speculative metaphysical

³¹ Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche* (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 214.

³² Lanier Anderson, op. cit., p. 753.

³³ Ibid., p. 735.

³⁴ Nietzsche, BGE, section 36.

thesis,³⁵ it can now be seen that the will to power is a non-foundationalist internal realist thesis. It is internal realist to the extent that any ontological claims that Nietzsche makes here and expects to be taken as "true" are postulated from within the realm of theory and constrained by the data of the various sciences. However, such data themselves cannot be non-propositional sensory claims but rather they must be perspectively oriented claims. They are perspectival in character because they are the results of particular scientific inquiry. Thus the very "data" themselves are theory laden. Christoph Cox captures this line of thought when he argues that Nietzsche's "empiricism" does not amount to "verificationism". Cox maintains that

Nietzsche is not a verificationist who can do away with metaphysical and theological beliefs simply by pointing to a lack of empirical evidence for them. On Nietzsche's view, as we have seen, interpretations can be criticized only on the basis of other interpretations, not by recourse to some bare, uninterpreted fact.³⁶

This can be seen from Nietzsche's criticism of positivism's appeal to "facts",³⁷ and his claim that perceptions "are already the *result* of [...] *assimilation* and *equalization* with regard to *all* the past in us; they do not follow directly upon the impression".³⁸ Cox therefore describes Nietzsche's empiricism as a "holistic empiricism" that, according to Cox,

maintains that, while all knowledge is generated out of sensuous affection, the unit of empirical significance is neither the individual sensation nor the isolated statement of fact but the theory or interpretation as a whole in which sensations and statements are lodged.³⁹

Nietzsche's doctrine of the will to power, in the context of its concern with the methodological unity of the sciences, may, then, be described as a second order belief. A first order belief can be articulated as "beliefs

³⁵ Keith Ansell Pearson, 'Nietzsche's Brave New World of Force', *Pli* 9 (2000), p. 26.

³⁶ Christoph Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation* (London: University of California Press, 1999), p. 100 n. 43.

³⁷ Nietzsche, WP, 481 (1883-1888).

³⁸ Ibid., 500.

³⁹ Cox, op. cit., p. 99.

about objects in the world", whilst second-order beliefs are "'epistemic' beliefs about those beliefs".⁴⁰ Williams explains this distinction as follows:

since any rational system of beliefs must allow for its own change and development, and for the justification of the beliefs it contains, it is clear that such a system cannot contain only first-order beliefs but must also contain second-order beliefs about techniques for acquiring beliefs.⁴¹

Thus second order beliefs explain how our first order beliefs "hang together".⁴² By opting for a coherence theory of justification of our epistemic claims, Nietzsche avoids appeals to foundationalist self-justifying beliefs that in turn justify the rest of our beliefs. Nietzsche claims

An isolated judgment is never "true," never knowledge; only in the connection [*Zusammenhange*] and relation [*Beziehung*] of many judgments is there any surety [*Bürgschaft*].⁴³

Thus the guiding principle behind the epistemological doctrine of the will to power is to demonstrate how the results of the various sciences "hang together" as a coherent whole. Nietzsche maintains that

the results of science do acquire a perfect strictness and certainty in their coherence to each other [*in ihrem Zusammenhange mit einander*].⁴⁴

Nietzsche therefore argues for the cogency of absolute truths. Such truths may be described as cross-perspectival truths that are true in all human perspectives. Hales and Welshon capture this sense of absolute perspectivist truth in the following:

⁴⁰ Michael Williams, *Groundless Belief* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), p. 106.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ Nietzsche, WP, 530 (1883-1888).

⁴⁴ Nietzsche, HAH, 19.

in characterising absolute human truths it is not claimed that they are true *outside* of perspectives or true *extra*-perspectively. Rather, the claim is that there are truths that are truths *within all* human perspectives, that is, that there are *cross*-perspectival truths. The attempt to talk about truth values (indeed, the attempt to talk of anything) outside of human perspectives is to talk nonsense or to commit a category mistake.⁴⁵

In this way, it seems that for Nietzsche absolute truths are compatible with his perspectivist thesis. This compatibility can be further demonstrated by reflecting on Nietzsche's contextualist account of our truths whereby truth is indexed to a perspective. The contextualist account maintains that standards of justification vary across, and are determined by, particular contexts. Hales and Welshon articulate the contextualist view in the following way:

it is possible under contextualism for a proposition to be true, a person to believe it, for that person to have reasons for their belief, and for that person to still lack knowledge, even though another person may believe the same thing, have the same reasons for their belief, and have knowledge. According to DeRose, this is no different than a person standing in a yellow-painted room, saying "this room is yellow," and then walking to a gray-painted room and saying "this room is yellow." Even though they say the same thing both times, only the first utterance is true; in moving to the gray room, the context of utterance (to which "this" is sensitive) changes. According to contextualists, "know" is an indexical (like "here," "now," and "this") because the truth-sensitivity component of knowledge is indexical.⁴⁶

Nietzsche considers our individual truth claims to be warranted contextually. However, this is not incompatible with absolute truths as defined above. This can be seen more clearly if we consider absolute truth not in the sense of transcending context but rather in the sense of being intra-contextually warranted. In other words, Nietzsche's absolute truths are also contextual truths to the extent that they must be warranted in each particular context. They are absolute because they are true in all

⁴⁵ Steven D. Hales and Rex Welshon, *Nietzsche's Perspectivism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000), pp. 33-4.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 121.

human perspectives. Thus, as an internal realist, any ontological conclusions that Nietzsche reaches using this method of inquiry will be *derivative*. Thus they will be neither foundationalist nor metaphysical realist in character. However, there are two possible objections to Nietzsche's internal realist thesis that must be addressed here. Both objections challenge the compatibility of Nietzsche's brand of realism with his perspectival notion of justification. The first objection claims that realism is not compatible with justification "from within". This objection threatens Nietzsche's retention of a realist constraint. The second objection does the same thing by threatening our one world reading of Nietzsche. It does this by claiming that since truth is a contextual matter and so relative to a perspective or conceptual scheme there are multiple possible worlds, rather than one world that constrains our epistemic claims and to which those claims are adequate. Let us address each of these objections in turn.

The initial objection is one often levied at the coherence theory of truth. It claims that our second order truths fail to capture the world and thus that the coherentist, which is essentially what Nietzsche is when it comes to the question of truth, cuts justification off from the world. It is important for our purposes that Nietzsche can meet this challenge successfully. For, if the charge is correct and Nietzsche is guilty of divorcing justification and truth from the world then he will have deprived himself of any appeal to the realist constraint that we have argued is a necessary component of his overcoming of metaphysical realism.

In response, however, Nietzsche can overcome the above objection if we can show that the foundationalist's notion of world as outlined above is a vacuous one and that the idealist alternative is equally incoherent. Allow me to probe this a little. It seems that Nietzsche's perspectivism disallows all forms of foundationalism and appeals to nonpropositional knowledge. Michael Williams argues, correctly I believe, that any theory-independent claims regarding how the world is constituted in itself entail foundationalist appeals.⁴⁷ Such claims appeal to knowledge outside of all perspectives which is, for Nietzsche, an incoherent position. Furthermore, such foundationalist appeals are epistemically

⁴⁷ Michael Williams, op. cit., p. 101. The foundationalist takes truth to consist in unmediated contact with the world whether in the form of pure a priori cognition or noninferential acquaintance with the sensory given. The notion of "world" that is presupposed in this charge is that of a theory independent world that may differ radically from our epistemic claims.

impotent. Non-propositional claims to knowledge cannot play any epistemic role in the justification of our beliefs. Thus, any appeal to how the world is in itself, that is independent of any theory or description, is vacuous. Williams articulates both the objection to theory laden truths and what he considers to be the fundamental emptiness and incoherence of the objection. He states:

One can become haunted by the picture of one's belief system incorporating all sorts of internal relations of justification while, as a whole, floating above the world with no point of contact. But this worry is incoherent, because the concept of 'the world' which is operative here is completely vacuous. As soon as we start thinking of that with which belief has to make contact as congeries of elementary particles, patterns of retinal irradiation, or relational arrays of sensuous colour-patches, we are operating within some particular theory of the way the world is, and the question of how belief relates to the world no longer seems puzzling. The question can exert its paralysing effect only as long as (and indeed because) the notion of 'the world' is allowed to remain as the notion of something completely unspecifiable.⁴⁸

This objection that a coherence theory cuts justification off from the world partakes in the oscillation between criteriological realism and sceptical idealism. It does this by maintaining that if one rejects foundationalism then one has no alternative but to embrace idealism whereby justification is cut off from the world and all attempts to retain a realist constraint are forfeited. However, the sceptical idealist alternative is equally incoherent. It too adopts the notion of a theory-independent world. With this view we merely return to the metaphysical realist conception of the thing-in-itself. Michael Williams captures this point when he argues that

The charge that [...] justification would be cut off from 'the world' fails because either the notion of 'the world' in play here is the notion of something completely unspecifiable, an unknowable thing-in-itself, in which case the charge is unintelligible, or else we are dealing with the notion of 'the world' as it is according to some particular theory, in which case the charge is not true.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 103.

From this we can see that Nietzsche can avoid the oscillation between criteriological realism and sceptical idealism by adopting a theory-dependent conception of world. This conception of world allows Nietzsche to retain a realist constraint from within a theory-internal view of justification and truth.

It is at this point, however, that we turn to the second objection put forth by Cox. Cox argues that the above appeal to the notion of "world" according to some particular theory or other succeeds in overcoming the metaphysical realist commitment to the thing-in-itself only by embracing ontological relativity. Cox argues that Nietzsche's contention that the notion of world is meaningful only under some description or other, coupled with what he takes to be Nietzsche's further claim, that all perspectives are "incongruent" in the strong sense of being "incompatible"⁵⁰ with one another, results in the view that we most correctly speak of "world" in the plural rather than in the singular.

This view proceeds from the naturalistic premise that we never encounter "the world as it is in itself" but always "the world as it appears under a particular description." Because there is no comparing "a description of the world" with "the world as it is under no description at all," this latter notion turns out, at best, to be superfluous. All we ever can do is compare descriptions with other descriptions. And because there is no One True World, there is no description that could show itself to be the One true Description by "corresponding to" that World. Thus there will always be many descriptions and no single, independent world that they all describe. Each *description*, then, is actually a *prescription* that constructs a world, leaving us with no World but many worlds.⁵¹

What is most troubling about Cox's reading is his view that the various descriptions of the world are incompatible with one another. It is important for our purposes that we can overcome this reading because it serves to undermine our thesis in two principal ways. Firstly, it denies the idea that the world constrains our epistemic claims. It does this by entertaining the idea of a plurality of possible worlds and the consequent denial that some interpretations are more correct or adequate than others.

⁵⁰ Cox, op. cit., p. 156.

⁵¹ Ibid.

We want to retain the notion of empirical constraint here to facilitate our claim that Nietzsche overcomes the metaphysical realist commitment to the thing-in-itself and the related oscillation between criteriological realism and sceptical idealism. Secondly, by arguing that the various perspectival appropriations of the world are incompatible with one another, Cox denies the possibility of absolute perspectival truths. In so doing, Cox's reading renders Nietzsche's perspectivism incompatible with absolute truth and consequently with the ontological doctrine of the will to power. We will address each of these queries in turn.

The lack of constraint entailed by this reading can be seen from Cox's claim that each "description" of the world is in fact a "prescription".⁵² From this it seems that Cox puts forth a constitutive reading of Nietzsche's perspectivism according to which the world is organized in multiple incompatible ways. That this entails that the world places no constraint on our perspectival truths can be further seen from Cox's claim that the possibility of a plurality of incompatible interpretations "follows not from 'the world' being too much but from its being too little".⁵³ However, this lack of empirical constraint emerges from what seems to me to be Cox's conflation of "interpretation" with "the world". According to Cox's reading the world is not ontologically independent of the multiplicity of interpretations. However, we can overcome this objection by appealing to two particular passages from Nietzsche's writings that suggest that Nietzsche is concerned to maintain the very ontological independence that Cox denies. The first passage to which we turn is BGE 22 where Nietzsche insists on the independence of the world from its interpretation. Here Nietzsche considers the physicist's notion of conformity to law as an example of bad interpretive practice. Of this interpretation Nietzsche argues that

it is not a factual matter, not a "text," but rather no more than a naïve humanitarian concoction, a contortion of meaning that allows you to succeed in accommodating the democratic instincts of the modern soul! [...] But, as I say, this is interpretation, not text; and someone could come along with the opposite intention and interpretative skill who, looking at the *very same nature and referring to the very same phenomena* would read out of it the ruthlessly tyrannical and unrelenting assertion of power claims.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., p. 152.

⁵⁴ My italics.

It is important to note that it is not a theory's status as an interpretation that Nietzsche is questioning here but rather it is the epistemic merit of a particular interpretation as a claim to absolute truth that is at issue. This can be seen from the fact that Nietzsche refers to his own doctrine of the will to power as an interpretation whilst presenting it as a true ontological doctrine.⁵⁵ We have already seen the manner in which Nietzsche thinks that his interpretation of the will to power can be awarded greater epistemic status than its predecessors, due to what Nietzsche considers to be the methodologically more scrupulous birth of his own doctrine. His desire to retain the ontological independence of the world from its interpretations can be further witnessed in his account of philology as the art of reading well. Nietzsche states that

Philology is to be understood here in a very wide sense as the art of reading well — of being able to read off a text *without* falsifying it by interpretation, *without* losing caution, patience, subtlety in the desire for understanding. Philology as *ephexis* [indecisiveness] in interpretation.⁵⁶

Alan D. Schrift captures Nietzsche's argument here when he states:

in his transvalued notion of philology, the world becomes a text that Nietzsche exhorts us to read well (see, for example, *HAH*, 8, where Nietzsche discusses what is needed for metaphysicians to apply the philological method established for books to 'the writing of nature [*die Schrift der Natur*]). All the while, moreover, the philological demands of honesty and justice require that we keep the text *separate* from its interpretation.⁵⁷

Furthermore, Schrift cites a passage from one of Nietzsche's final notebooks, Spring 1888, where he exclaims "The *lack of philology*: one continually confuses the exegesis with the *text* — and what an

⁵⁵ See WP, 1067 where Nietzsche maintains "the world is will to power — and nothing besides". Cf. BGE, 36.

⁵⁶ Nietzsche, AC, 52.

⁵⁷ Alan D. Schrift, *Nietzsche and the Question of Interpretation* (New York: Routledge, 1990). p. 165.

'exegis'!"⁵⁸ We must remind ourselves very briefly here that the fact that Nietzsche separates the world from its interpretations is not problematic for our anti-metaphysical realist and anti-sceptical reading of Nietzsche. The fact that our truths are indexed to perspectives does not entail the sceptical argument that we are radically in error. Rather it has been our contention that this sceptical scenario is dependent upon acceptance of the indeterminacy of the theory-independent notion of the thing-in-itself. With this in mind we will now turn to Cox's rejection of the possibility of absolute truths.

I will begin to address Cox's claim that Nietzsche's rejection of the thing-in-itself entails the rejection of the possibility of absolute truth by citing Cox's four-point summary of his argument:

In a general sense, the doctrine of "ontological relativity" holds: (1) that it makes no sense to give an absolute description of "what there is"; (2) that it only makes sense to say "what there is" relative to a background theory, which will have its own purposes, principles, and criteria of individuation; (3) that there exist a host of such theories, many of which are equally warranted but incompatible with one another; and thus (4) that there is no uniquely correct "way the world is" but rather as many "ways the world is" as there are warranted theories.⁵⁹

Here Cox seems to conflate absolute truth with truth as it is outside of all perspectives. Thus he conflates absolute perspectival truth with the metaphysical criteriologically realist notion of absolute extra-perspectival truth. He considers contextually indexed truth or truth as it is relative to a particular theory to entail a relativist conception of truth. However, we can overcome this reading by re-examining the passage to which Cox appeals in support of his claim regarding the incompatibility of perspectives. In WP 568 Nietzsche argues that the multiplicity of perspectives is "incongruent". Cox interprets this as a strong claim that argues for the incompatibility of perspectives. However, it is possible to read Nietzsche as making the weaker anti-metaphysical realist point which claims that the multiple perspectives are non-reducible to each other. This would then entail the view that there is no one true extra-perspectival description of the world to which all other descriptions are

⁵⁸ Nietzsche, *Nietzsche Werke, Kritische Gesamtausgabe*, VIII, 3:15 [82], cited in Schrift, *ibid.*, p. 165.

⁵⁹ Cox, *op. cit.*, pp. 155-6.

ultimately reducible. The notion of one true description entails the criteriological realist idea of justification "from outside". This in turn entails the idea that justification involves "confrontations" with reality independently of any particular description or theory. In this way this view maintains, contrary to Nietzsche's anti-metaphysical realist view, that ontology precedes epistemology. Thus Nietzsche must maintain that perspectives are non-reducible to one another. However, the non-reducibility of perspectives does not entail their essential incompatibility. It merely stipulates that truth is essentially a contextual issue in the manner in which we outlined the contextualist thesis earlier. The doctrine of the will to power as an absolute truth that is true in all perspectives does not violate this clause because as an intra-contextual truth it respects the priority of context. This can be seen when we consider that the ontological doctrine of the will to power, as an absolute truth, emerges as a doctrine of unity of the various sciences and that the articulation of the doctrine is dependent upon the theory bound data of the respective sciences. This fact brings to our attention the non-reducible character of the doctrine of the will to power. The will to power as an absolute perspectivist truth does not stand over and above the various sciences molding their data to the doctrine. Rather the ontological doctrine of the will to power emerges from within a reflection upon these data and how they hang together as a methodological unity. Thus we return to Nietzsche's concern with economy of principles. It seems that the cross-perspectival conception of absolute truth, which stipulates that a perspective is absolutely true if it is true in all human perspectives, is, despite Cox's claims to the contrary, demanded by Nietzsche's doctrine of economy of principles.

In responding to the above objections we have shown how Nietzsche's conception of the ontological doctrine of the will to power, as an absolute truth, is justified within the parameters of his perspectival theory of knowledge and his overall anti-metaphysical realist paradigm. Rüdiger Grimm argues that the will to power is an inclusive principle for Nietzsche that embraces all the traditional philosophical categories of ontology, epistemology, axiology, anthropology etc. Thus Grimm maintains that the characterization of the will to power "as a way of knowing"⁶⁰ is only one of the many aspects of the will to power. Whilst I concur with Grimm that the will to power does indeed embrace all of the traditional philosophical categories, it seems that, within the context of

⁶⁰ H. Rüdiger Grimm, *Nietzsche's Theory of Knowledge* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1977), p. ix.

Nietzsche's anti-foundationalist and anti-metaphysical realist commitments, the will to power as a way of knowing must be prioritized. In this way, we have seen, the ontology of the will to power derives from the epistemic doctrine of the will to power as a reflection on philosophical method and knowledge. It is precisely in this way that Nietzsche avoids making foundationalist claims about what the world is like in itself, that is, independently of our perspectival takings. Thus the doctrine of the will to power is an absolute truth to the extent that it is justified as a cross-perspectival truth and not through recourse to extra-perspectival claims to knowledge. My argument, then, has been that Nietzsche prioritizes epistemology over ontology. In so doing, he maintains, contrary to the criteriological realist, that justification is properly understood as a theory-internal or perspectival matter. Furthermore, we have witnessed Nietzsche's view that although justification does not involve confrontations with the world it is still possible to put forth perspectival absolute truths. From this we have seen that justification, for Nietzsche, remains a perspectival issue without succumbing to the sceptical idealist's problem of confinement.

In further conclusion, Nietzsche emphasizes the notion of realist constraint by claiming that absolute truths remain open to the possibility of revision and further refinement. With regard to the doctrine of the will to power he states:

Granted this too is only interpretation — and you will be eager enough to raise the objection? — well, so much the better. —⁶¹

Here Nietzsche draws our attention to his view that although epistemology precedes ontology when it comes to the justification of our epistemic claims, epistemology does not constitute ontology. Our perspectives in this sense do not literally shape reality. They merely shape our knowledge of it. Thus Nietzsche aims to avoid the weaknesses that Donald Davidson detects in idealism and verificationism. According to Davidson a view of this type attempts to "read out of existence whatever it decrees lies beyond the scope of human knowledge". Thus it tries "to trim reality down to fit its epistemology".⁶² In rejecting such a

⁶¹ BGE, 22.

⁶² Davidson cited by Rorty in "Realism, Anti-Realism and Pragmatism: Comments on Alston, Chisholm, Davidson, Harman and Searle" in *Realism/Anti-Realism and Epistemology*, ed. Christopher B. Kulp (Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 1997), p. 149.

view Nietzsche allows for discovery and conceptual revision and thus for the much sought-after realist constraint. It further suggests that, for Nietzsche, the will to power does not represent the end of the story. How the story will progress is beyond the scope of our inquiry. What is important for us is that the will to power is compatible with Nietzsche's perspectivism and that it plays a substantial role in facilitating Nietzsche's need for a realist constraint that is compatible with his overall anti-metaphysical realist commitments. I conclude by citing Nietzsche's articulation of his multi-perspectival conception of truth and justification.

There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival "knowing"; and *the more* affects we allow to speak about a thing [...] the more complete will be our 'concept' of the thing, our 'objectivity'.⁶³

⁶³ Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, translated by Maudemarie Clark and Alan J. Swensen (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1998), III, 12.

'The Animal That May Promise': Nietzsche on the Will, Naturalism, and Duty

THOMAS BAILEY

It is often thought that Nietzsche simply denies that agents rationally and consciously determine their actions, and that they can legitimately be held responsible, and morally evaluated, for their actions. This is perhaps unsurprising, given that in *Twilight of the Idols*, for instance, he identifies 'the error of free will' as one of 'The Four Great Errors'. 'One has stripped becoming of its innocence', he writes there, 'if being this or that is traced back to will, to intentions, to responsible acts: the doctrine of will was essentially invented for the purpose of punishment'. Such statements can be found throughout Nietzsche's writings and are often explained as symptoms of his ontology, which is standardly interpreted as reducing agency, evaluation, and being to the 'becoming' of natural forces. In this regard, appeal is often made to the section in the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality* in which Nietzsche writes, 'A quantum of force is just [...] a quantum of drive, will, effect – more precisely, it is nothing other than this driving, willing, effecting itself, and it can appear otherwise only through the seduction of language (and the fundamental errors of reason petrified in it), which understands and misunderstands every effecting as conditioned by an effective thing, by a "subject"'. He continues, 'there is no "being" behind the action, effecting, becoming; "the doer" is merely imagined into the action, – the action is everything'.¹

The purpose of this paper, however, is to suggest an alternative interpretation of such statements. That is, this paper attempts to demonstrate that the target of Nietzsche's criticism of 'free will' and

¹ *TI* VI 7, *GM* I 13. Translations of Nietzsche's texts are my own, and references employ the standard English abbreviations.