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The Will to Power as Knowledge: An Exegesis of Nietzsche's Remarks on Epistemology and Language — Part III

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This paper is the third installment of a three-part series providing an exegesis of Nietzsche's remarks on language and epistemology. Part I, published separately, contains the following sections: (1) Nietzsche's Moral Foundation; (2) The Will to Power and Epistemological Motivations; (3) Metaphysical Need; and (4) Perspectivism and the Text Analogy. Part II, also published separately, contains the following sections: (5) Evaluating Interpretations; and (6) The Assumptions of Logic. Part III, presented here, contains the following sections: (7) Language; (8) Systems and the Historical Approach; and (9) Beyond Scepticism. Part III also includes a full bibliography. Section numbers and references are numbered consecutively throughout the entire series.

(7) Language

Since Nietzsche began his academic career as a philologist, it is natural that he should be deeply interested in the role of language in philosophy. As with logic and epistemology in general, however, Nietzsche never systematically developed his views on language. In fact, nearly all of Nietzsche's remarks on the nature of language are made in connection with some other philosophical problem, making it difficult to isolate these remarks with the intent of crystallizing a general theory of language which would truly reflect Nietzsche's views.

One of the earliest sources which may be consulted to see how Nietzsche's views on language developed is the short piece entitled "On Music and Words." In considering the following passage, one should keep in mind

that it is only a prototype of Nietzsche's mature position.

> In the multiplicity of languages the fact at once manifests itself, that word and thing do not necessarily coincide with one another completely, but that the word is a symbol. But what does the word symbolise? Most certainly only conceptions, be these now conscious ones or as in the greater number of cases, unconscious: for how should a word-symbol correspond to that innermost nature of which we and the world are images?[74]

Unlike Wittgenstein in the *Tractatus*, Nietzsche never attempted to establish an isomorphic relationship between language and phenomena.

Given the essentially Kantian framework with which Nietzsche began, Nietzsche concluded that if words correspond to anything, they do not correspond to actual things, but rather to one's conceptions about those things. To give an example, the word "chair" does not name the object which one sits in, but instead the idea which one holds of that object. The idea is the synthesis of one's sense perceptions of the chair gathered from a number of points of view, but never from *every possible* point of view. Nietzsche retained the perspectivism of this approach in his later works, but he greatly modified, as shall be seen, the view of language which has been presented thus far.

In another early essay, entitled "On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense," Nietzsche discusses the relationship between language and the formation of ideas:

> Every word becomes at once an idea not by having, as one might presume, to serve as a reminder for the original experience happening but once and absolutely individualised, to which experience such word [*sic*] owes its origin, no, but by having simultaneously to fit innumerable, more or less similar (which really means never equal, therefore altogether unequal) cases. Every idea originates through equating the unequal. As certainly as no one leaf is exactly similar to any other, so certain it is that the idea "leaf" has been formed through an arbitrary omission of these individual differences, through a for-

> getting of the differentiating qualities, and this idea now awakens the notion that in nature there is, beside the leaves, a something called *the* "leaf," perhaps a primal form according to which all leaves were woven, drawn, accurately measured, coloured, crinkled, painted, but by unskilled hands, so that no copy had turned out correct and trustworthy as a true copy of the primal form.[75]

In this passage Nietzsche is obviously attempting a criticism of Plato's doctrine of the Forms. Nietzsche proceeds by explaining that certain concepts such as *similarity* and *equality*, discussed at length in the previous installment of this essay, involve a falsification of what the senses actually reveal. Words, then, which purport to describe phenomena, are actually nothing more than convenient devices which can be utilized to reduce multiplicity into unity. The problem with this view is, of course, that it fails to embrace a truly comprehensive view of the many ways in which language is actually used. What do words such as *ouch* and *of* signify — even mentally? Nietzsche, even in his later writings, never fully escaped from the problems which this type of approach creates; yet, as Nietzsche's method of dealing with language became more sophisticated, he managed to find his way out of many perplexing philosophical puzzles which might only be capable of being solved by adopting the method which Nietzsche did.

Nietzsche was as much concerned about the problem of obscurity as more recent analytic philosophers. Philosophy, in Nietzsche's view, had unintentionally obscured many important issues under the guise of clarity. Consider, for example, this passage from *Miscellaneous Maxims and Opinions:*

> The essential feature of the black art of obscurantism is not its intention of clouding the brain, but its attempt to darken the picture of the word and cloud our idea of existence. It often employs the method of thwarting all illumination of the intellect, but at times it uses the very opposite means, seeking by the highest refinement of the intellect to induce a satiety of the intellect's fruits. Hair-splitting metaphysicians, who pave the way for scepticism and by their exces-

> sive acumen provoke a distrust of acumen, are excellent instruments of the more subtle form of obsurantism.[76]

Wittgenstein might have called this same tendency a "subliming of the logic of language." But rather than endorse a position in which the ordinary usage of words becomes a criterion for the validity of philosophical language, Nietzsche opted for a more iconoclastic view of language in which certain experiences must remain ineffable.

It is important to distinguish Nietzsche's view on this point with the manner in which a mystic or Platonist might speak of ineffable experiences. A mystic, for example, may argue that language is inadequate to describe certain experiences because these experiences are experiences of a transcendental nature — experiences outside the limitations of space and time.[77] But Nietzsche tended to see *all* experiences as occurring within space and time, and it is precisely because of this that experiences cannot be adequately accounted for in language. The world is simply too complex and transitory for language to be able to accurately represent what experience reveals. Nietzsche writes,

> Our ordinary inaccurate observation takes a group of phenomena as one and calls them a fact. Between this fact and another we imagine a vacuum, we isolate each fact. In reality, however, the sum of our actions and cognitions is no series of facts and intervening vacua, but a continuous stream. . . . We isolate not only the single fact, but the groups of apparently equal facts. . . . In both cases we are wrong. — The word and the concept are the most obvious reason for our belief in this isolation of groups of actions. We do not merely thereby designate the things; the thought at the back of our minds is that by the word and the concept we can grasp the essence of the actions. We are still constantly led astray by words and actions, and are induced to think of things as simpler than they are, as separate, indivisible, existing in the absolute. Language contains a hidden philosophical mythology, which, however careful we may be, breaks out afresh at every moment.[78]

It would seem, initially at least, that Nietzsche is anticipating here

Frege's "revolution in logic" which was being developed at roughly the same that Nietzsche was writing. Nietzsche recognized, for example, that language contains a "hidden philosophical mythology." For Frege, this "mythology" could be purged from language by carefully distinguishing between the sense and reference of words, as well as the grammatical and logical forms of propositions. Nietzsche, like Frege, was deeply concerned about the cognitive possibilities of language, *viz.*, the extent to which language can be utilized to convey true information about the world. In this sense Nietzsche is more akin to Frege than he is to the later Wittgenstein. But whereas Frege would hold that by purifying language of its "hidden philosophical mythology" one could distill certain true statements about the nature of the world, Nietzsche insisted that language by its very nature, no matter how "formalized" it had become, could never disclose, even scientifically, any such propositions.

Nietzsche undoubtedly saw language as imposing certain limitations which must be endured in one's quest to understand the workings of the world. Language could in fact become a definite impediment to the solving of philosophical problems, as this selection from *The Dawn of Day* indicates:

> WORDS BLOCK UP OUR PATH. — Wherever primitive men put down a word, they thought they had made a discovery. How different the case really was! — they had come upon a problem, and while they thought they had solved it, they had in reality placed an obstacle in the way of its solution. Now, with every new piece of knowledge, we stumble over petrified words and mummified conceptions, and would rather break a leg than a word in doing so.[79]

The growth of scientific language in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries can be seen as a positive attempt to overcome some of the difficulties which Nietzsche set forth here. As science uncovered new bits of data, it became necessary for science to develop new vocabularies and symbols. Too often, however, new data is expressed in terms which betray a much older way of thinking. For example, had the atomism of the ancient Greeks not been replaced by the substance-attribute approach of

the Middle Ages, the development of modern physics might have occurred much earlier in human history. The present scientific understanding of the universe had to overcome not only the concepts of the medieval view of the world, but also the language in which those concepts were embedded.

For Nietzsche, however, the problem went much deeper. However empirical science may claim to be, the inherent rational element in the language of science is still suspect. Scientific language presents an ordered and structured view of the world, whereas the world may in fact be quite the opposite in nature. Language is in some ways the culprit behind science's inability to grasp a true understanding of the nature of reality. Nietzsche writes,

> We believe in reason: this, however, is the philosophy of gray *concepts*. Language depends on the most naive prejudices. Now we read disharmonies and problems into things because we think *only* in the form of language — and thus believe in the "eternal truth" of "reason" (e.g., subject, attribute, etc.) *We cease to think when we refuse to do so under the constraint of language;* we barely reach the doubt that sees this limitation as a limitation. *Rational thought is interpretation according to a scheme that we cannot throw off.*[80]

In contrast to Wittgenstein's view in the *Tractatus* — namely, that the limits of one's language are the limits of one's world[81] — Nietzsche argues that even language which purports to describe the world scientifically has certain limitations which cannot be overcome. "Is language the adequate expression of all realities?" Nietzsche asks in "On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense."[82] Wittgenstein had left this question open in the *Tractatus* by appealing to the mystical. Nietzsche, on the other hand, felt that descriptive language, even in its most "atomized" form, is based upon certain questionable assumptions of logic, as noted previously.[83]

Although language is flexible to a certain extent, in that it can handle a wide variety of situations with a limited set of terms, the terms themselves are inflexible, i.e., every word arouses certain mental associations taken from one's past experiences via the synthesizing process of memory.

Because of this process, language can still only discuss sense data in relatively generalized terms. For example, one term "chromosome," can be applied to a number of similar objects, but by using only one term in describing chromosomes, individual differences in chromosomes cannot be taken into account.

To be fully descriptive, then, each component of a Wittgensteinian "atomic fact" would have to be given a separate name. One name could not be used for two components since no two components would be exactly identical. The confusions which would inevitably result from this approach would undoubtedly be the best pragmatic refutation of it. One must remember too that the relationships which constitute "facts" are, in Nietzsche's view, continually changing. It is readily apparent that the problem of language was, for Nietzsche, parallel to the problem of logic.

In language, as in logic, the concept of substance is the object of much of Nietzsche's philosophical wrath. At one point Nietzsche specifically locates the " . . . root of the idea of substance in language."[84] The grammatical structure of virtually every Indo-European language requires each sentence to contain a subject and a verb. From this relatively innocent grammatical rule, certain philosophical assumptions may be made. One might argue, for example, that if a verb expresses action, there must be a subject which executes that action; the subject is then assumed to be an agent which performs a given action.

In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche presents a case in which the subject-verb relationship is nonsensical as a descriptive device:

> . . . The seduction of language (and . . . the fundamental errors of reason that are petrified in it) . . . conceives and misconceives all effects as conditioned by something that causes effects, by a "subject". . . . The popular mind separates the lightning from its flash and takes the latter for an *action*, for the operation of a subject called lightning. . . . But there is no such substratum; there is no "being" behind doing, effecting, becoming; "the doer" is merely a fiction added to the deed — the deed is everything. The popular mind in fact doubles the deed; when it sees the lightning flash, it is the deed of a

> deed: it posits the same event first as a cause and then a second time as its effect. Scientists do no better when they say "force moves," "force causes," and the like — all its coolness, its freedom from emotion notwithstanding, our entire science still lies under the misleading influence of language and has not disposed of that little changeling, the "subject". . . . [85]

It is interesting that the linguist Benjamin Lee Whorf, in his study of native American languages, discovered that languages with grammatical rules which do not insist on a subject-verb distinction may be better equipped to deal with certain types of phenomena. The example he gives is almost identical to Nietzsche's:

> We are constantly reading into nature fictional acting entities, simply because our verbs must have substantives in front of them. We have to say "It flashed" or "A light flashed," setting up an actor, "it" or "light," to perform what we call an action, "to flash." Yet the flashing and the light are one and the same! The Hopi language reports the flash with a simple verb, *rehpi:* "flash (occurred)." There is no division into subject and predicate. . . . Hopi can and does have verbs without subjects, a fact which may give that tongue potentialities, probably never to be developed, as a logical system for understanding some aspects of the universe. Undoubtedly modern science, strongly reflecting western Indo-European tongues, often does as we all do, sees actions and forces where it sometimes might be better to see states.[86]

The later Wittgenstein might have located the confusion in the attempt to see a substance behind every substantive. In many cases there is no such substance to point to, though one may be deceived into thinking so by the very manner in which language (Indo-European languages in particular) functions. William Butler Yeats indicates a similar situation when he asks at the end of "Among School Children," "How can we know the dancer from the dance?"[87] In dancing there is but one unified action, but grammatically it is supposed that there is an agent, the dancer, which performs

a separate action, the dance.

Observations such as these led Nietzsche to the conclusion that a sharp distinction must be drawn between language on the one hand, and that which language presumes to describe on the other. Nietzsche writes, "... In language man has placed a world of his own beside the other...."[88] Because the process of thinking is so closely tied to the language one uses to think with, perspectivism in language becomes a decisive issue. In *The Joyful Wisdom* Nietzsche comments,

> It has caused me the greatest trouble, and forever causes me the greatest trouble, to perceive that unspeakably more depends upon *what things are called*, than on what they are. The reputation, the name and appearance, the importance, the usual measure and weight of things — each being in origin most frequently an error and arbitrariness thrown over the things like a garment, and quite alien to their essence and even to their exterior — have gradually, by the belief therein and its continuous growth from generation to generation, grown as it were on-and-into things and become their very body....[89]

Nietzsche undoubtedly held that how one perceives things is, to a great extent, determined by the language one uses to talk about the things he perceives. In Whorf's well-known example, the language of certain Eskimo tribes has several different words to describe that which is designated in English by the single word "snow." Whorf writes, "To an Eskimo, this all-inclusive word would be almost unthinkable; he would say that falling snow, slushy snow, and so on, are sensuously and operationally different...."[90] Whorf suggests that a reverse situation is found in the Hopi language, wherein insects, airplanes, and aviators are all represented by one word.[91]

The cultural situation in which language is developed will inevitably influence the manner in which one perceives the world. To distinguish between several different types of snow in a temperate climate — the climate in which English, for example, developed — is unnecessary for practical reasons. Still, certain fundamental differences in different kinds

of snow might be overlooked more readily by a person who speaks only English than they would by a person who speaks an Eskimo dialect. Nietzsche seems to reflect the same general way of thinking about the matter when he writes,

> The strange family resemblance of all Indian, Greek, and German philosophizing is explained easily enough. Where there is affinity of languages, it cannot fail, owing to the common philosophy of grammar — I mean, owing to the unconscious domination and guidance by similar grammatical functions — that everything is prepared at the outset for a similar development and sequence of philosophical systems; just as the way seems barred against certain other possibilities of world-interpretation. It is highly probable that philosophers within the domain of the Ural-Altaic languages (where the concept of the subject is least developed) look otherwise "into the world," and will be found on paths of thought different from those of the Indo-Germanic peoples and the Muslims: the spell of certain grammatical functions is ultimately also the spell of physiological valuations and racial conditions. So much by way of rejecting Locke's superficiality regarding the origin of ideas.[92]

The philosophical implications of what Nietzsche is saying here are obvious. To say that German philosophy, for example, is more "true" than Chinese philosophy is like saying that the German language is more "true" than the Chinese language.

Perspectivism in language meant, for Nietzsche, that whatever could be said about any given set of sense data is valid only to the extent that one recognizes that the information conveyed is transmitted from one point of view alone. Therefore, when an English-speaking individual calls a certain white substance *snow*, and the Eskimo calls it something else, each speaks of the same substance from a different point of view. Calibrating languages in translation is not the real issue here, since no such calibration may in fact be possible.

Since one can only think within a language-system, the speaker of English and the Eskimo may have different thoughts about the same

substance. Two different interpretations, then, may be given to identical sense perceptions by persons speaking two different languages. The validity of any approach, therefore, which operates under a fixed language-system is disputable. At any level of language there is a radical difference between what one sees and what one says one sees. The "saying" here is not purely descriptive, but rather interpretive.

This analysis explains perhaps why Nietzsche wrote, " . . . What can be thought of must certainly be a fiction."[93] In contrast to Wittgenstein's remarks in the *Tractatus* — "A thought contains the possibility of the situation of which it is the thought. What is thinkable is possible too"[94] — Nietzsche would hold that whatever is thinkable is sure to be an impossibility. The difference between these two views can only be grasped if one remembers that Nietzsche and Wittgenstein would disagree completely on whether or not an isomorphic relationship between language and phenomena could be established.

In analyzing states of mind — thoughts, feelings, emotions, etc. — Nietzsche came much closer to the type of philosophy which Wittgenstein advocated in his later writings. Consider, for example, Nietzsche's treatment of moral and religious feelings:

> . . . There are formed quick habitual connections of feelings and thoughts, which eventually, when they follow each other with lightning speed, are no longer felt as complexes but as *unities*. In this sense one speaks of the moral feeling, of the religious feeling, as if they were absolute unities: in reality they are streams with a hundred sources and tributaries. Here also, as so often happens, the unity of the word is no security for the unity of the thing.[95]

Different situations may arouse different feelings, but because of the limitations of language these feelings might be grouped together under one general category. For example, some persons may gaze at the stars and say that the experience gives them a "religious feeling." In another situation the exact same persons may feel compassion for their fellow human beings and once again say that the feeling is an explicitly religious one. In both cases the actual feelings are different, but one set of terms can

be used to describe them both. In reflecting upon such experiences, one must recognize that the feelings are distinct, even though the phrase "religious feeling" may suggest that the separate feelings are, at least, quite similar if not identical.[96]

Nietzsche applied a similar analysis to the process of thinking, although in the passage which follows the approach is much more difficult to grasp:

> When I analyze the process that is expressed in the sentence, "I think," I find a whole series of daring assertions that would be difficult, perhaps impossible, to prove; for example, that it is *I* who think, that there must necessarily be something that thinks, that thinking is an activity and operation on the part of a being who is thought of as a cause, that there is an "ego," and, finally, that it is already determined what is to be designated by thinking — that I *know* what thinking is. For if I had not already decided within myself what it is, by what standard could I determine whether that which is just happening is not perhaps "willing" or "feeling"? In short, the assertion "I think" assumes that I *compare* my state at the present moment with other states of myself which I know, in order to determine what it is. . . .[97]

Nietzsche's point here is that what actually happens when people say they are thinking does not support the philosophical inferences which may be drawn from the "corresponding" statement "I think."

The approach taken by Nietzsche has the potential of being an effective refutation of Descartes' *cogito ergo sum*, but it seems as if Nietzsche cannot escape from the notion that every time people say "I think," they are naming some sort of mental process. Even if one grants Nietzsche the right to distinguish between a large number of diverse mental processes, all of which are misleadingly grouped together under one statement "I think," Nietzsche still did not take note of the fact that certain usages of the phrase "I think" need not name any mental process whatsoever. For example, one person asks "Will this rope be long enough?" to which another responds, "I think." Here, the use of the phrase "I think" has nothing at all to do with mental states; it is being used instead as another

way of saying, "Yes, the rope will probably be long enough."

Since Nietzsche was not specifically a philosopher of language, many of his views on language remain underdeveloped. Had Nietzsche lived not at the end of the nineteenth century but at the end of the twentieth century, when the nature of language became a crucial issue, he may have been inclined to develop his thoughts more fully. Certainly Nietzsche's views stand in direct opposition to those theories of language advanced by such philosophers as Frege, Moore, Russell, and the logical positivists. Furthermore, Nietzsche undoubtedly anticipated many of the criticisms which Wittgenstein later leveled against the views of these thinkers in *Philosophical Investigations*. Nietzsche's greatest contribution, however, to the philosophy of language was his recognition of the fact that language presents one more variable which any philosopher must take into consideration. In the same way that philosophy is never free from ulterior motives, so too it is never free to think that the manner in which it uses language is unimportant.

(8) Systems and the Historical Approach

It should be obvious at this point that Nietzsche's way of doing philosophy was quite original. Whereas the traditional approach to philosophy undertook to establish the certainty of various "truths," Nietzsche continually questioned the motives and assumptions which lay behind these attempts. With regard to epistemology, therefore, Nietzsche never attempted to set forth a comprehensive theory of knowledge by which the validity of certain "truths" could be discerned. Since Nietzsche's approach in this matter was so radically different from the method adopted by traditional philosophy, it might be asked if what Nietzsche was doing can truly be called philosophy. Certainly if philosophy is defined as the attempt to capture the nature of the world in thought, Nietzsche was no philosopher.

Nietzsche was also extremely suspicious of traditional attempts to construct grand philosophical systems. In addition to his complaints against what most systematic philosophers had to say, Nietzsche also regarded the method of doing philosophy which they employed as a deliberate exercise

in dishonesty. "I mistrust all systematizers . . . ," Nietzsche writes. "The will to a system is a lack of integrity."[98] In *The Dawn of Day* Nietzsche points out that since the life-expectancy of human beings is seldom longer than seventy years, the value of obtaining knowledge is lost unless people can feel that within their lifetimes they have understood everything essential about the world. This "mad rush" for a comprehensive knowledge of the world inevitably led in the past to much sloppy thinking.

For the present, however, Nietzsche hopes that science and philosophy will take their time and not attempt to resolve crucial problems with a few rapid strokes of the philosophic pen. Philosophical systems which take little time to develop usually take little time to destroy. The attitude which Nietzsche took on this issue is similar to the attitude taken by the builders of the Gothic cathedrals — several generations may pass before the structure is finally completed. Nietzsche still sees, however, the psychological loss of value which can result. As Nietzsche suggests, "'What do I matter?' is written over the door of the thinker of the future."[99]

Nietzsche probably would not have endorsed the systematic approach to philosophy even under the above conditions, since systems always seem to present subjective opinions and convictions as if they were objective truths. If people approach life through a philosophical system, their views of the world will undoubtedly be colored by it. As with logic and language, philosophical systems can only present but one perspective of reality. Nietzsche seemed to advocate a more open-ended approach to the matter. If one's thoughts are crystallized into a philosophical system, that individual is no longer truly open to new influxes of data.

For Nietzsche, every philosophical idea can only be a tenative hypothesis; new experiences must be taken for what they are — they cannot be molded to fit into the Procrustean beds of philosophical systems. Walter Kaufmann comments,

> Nietzsche objects to the solution *en passant* of important problems; he would not deduce answers from a system. If the system's premises were truly beyond question, one need not object to the deduction of new answers. Only because there always are premises that ought to

> have been questioned and would have been found wanting if questioned, is it an unnecessary vitiation of new answers — and objectionable methodologically — if systematic consistency is allowed to dictate new solutions.[100]

It is not fair to call Nietzsche a sceptic on the grounds that he questioned the validity of systematic philosophy; rather, Nietzsche opted for an approach to philosophy which would be free to examine all aspects of reality without having to be committed to one fixed system of interpretation by which all experiences had to be classified. Nietzsche states,

> Commend me to all scepticism where I am permitted to answer: "Let us put it to the test!" But I don't wish to hear anything more of things and questions which do not admit of being tested.[101]

Against the dogmatism of systematic philosophy Nietzsche wrote, "Convictions are more dangerous enemies of truth than lies."[102] By this statement Nietzsche obviously meant that by holding one set opinion about any given subject, people deceive themselves into thinking that they possess an unchanging truth, whereas in fact it might be better for them to believe in a lie which they know to be false. Convictions, as with all "truths," do not spring automatically out of situations which necessitate a firm response. Rather, they are developed over long periods of time. "Every conviction has its history," Nietzsche notes, "its preliminary forms, its trials and errors."[103]

Certain fundamental attitudes may indeed have histories which are quite long. Racism, for example, is more likely to be learned from one's social environment than it is to be a well-thought-out opinion based upon one's own experiences. Even in philosophy certain prejudices arise because of the immutability of certain convictions. Nietzsche would undoubtedly cite as an example the ascetic tendency in the history of Western philosophy.

In contrast to the systematic approach to philosophy, Nietzsche advocated placing more emphasis on the history of ideas. Philosophers need to understand why people think the way they do, what influences have

helped to shape their thinking, and to what extent certain ancient prejudices have continued to exert an influence on modern modes of thought. A study of the history of ideas will provide answers to many of these questions; a thorough appreciation of history is essential to the philosopher. Nietzsche comments,

> A lack of the historical sense is the hereditary fault of all philosophers; many, indeed, unconsciously mistake the very latest variety of man, such as has arisen under the influence of certain religions, certain political events, for the permanent form from which one must set out. They will not learn that man has developed, that his faculty of knowledge has developed also. . . . [104]

Philosophy cannot be naive about the fact that many of its most cherished "truths" are merely the products, to some extent, of historical conditioning. The manner in which one thinks will undoubtedly be influenced by the historic philosophical models one chooses to follow. This choice, however, need not always be a conscious one.

(9) Beyond Scepticism

"The belief in truth," Nietzsche writes at one point, "begins with the doubt of all truths in which one has previously believed."[105] The world, for Nietzsche, could never be boxed in by the systems of philosophy and science. Living *in* the world was much more of an important issue for Nietzsche than merely thinking about it. To a large extent, of course, the manner in which individuals think *about* the world will determine how they live their lives, but Nietzsche preferred to keep his beliefs few and his manner of living open. Each new experience has the potential of liberating one from the disease and confinements of philosophy and logic. This liberation, however, can only be attained by the person of power — by the tough-minded individual. Such a person must be willing to forsake the comfort of any philosophy or religion which presumes to offer a haven from the world of change. Persons of power must live on the edge of things, being unafraid to plunge themselves into the contradictions and inconsistencies of living. Above all, they must be victorious in their

affirmation of life.

Nietzsche was careful to distinguish himself from the usual breed of sceptics — the "pale atheists, anti-Christians, immoralists, nihilists" — who were in Nietzsche's opinion " . . . far from being *free* spirits: *for they still have faith in truth.*"[106] The watchword for Nietzsche was, "Nothing is true, everything is permitted."[107] To live in such a world, one must be capable of adopting new truths, having new goals, and assimilating new perspectives. The truths people live by must be the truths which they themselves create. In deliberately placing themselves in situations which offer the greatest opportunity for new experiences, persons of power must approach the unknown with fearless determination. "With the unknown," Nietzsche writes, "one is confronted with danger, discomfort, and care: the first instinct is to abolish these painful states."[108]

How much of philosophy, Nietzsche might exclaim, has been motivated by a fear of the unknown! Many philosophers may feel that they have a hold on things, that the world has a center for them. But even as such philosophers comfort themselves with that which is familiar, Nietzsche's person of power is resolved to confront the unfamiliar, exploiting those "truths" which are necessary for life and destroying with the furor of an iconoclast those "truths" which are life-negating. The person of power must be open to every new possibility and each fresh experience no matter how much risk is involved.

Thither I'll travel, that's my notion,
  I'll trust myself, my grip,
Where opens wide and blue the ocean
  I'll ply my Genoa ship.

New things on new the world unfolds me,
  Time, space with noonday die:
Alone thy monstrous eye beholds me,
  Awful Infinity![109]

References

[74] Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Music and Words" in *Early Greek Philosophy and Other*

Essays, trans. Maximilian A. Mügge, vol. 2 of *The Complete Works*, pp. 30–31.

75 Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense" in *Early Greek Philosophy and Other Essays*, p. 179.

76 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Miscellaneous Maxims and Opinions*, trans. Paul V. Cohn, vol. 7 of *The Complete Works*, pp. 24–25 (§ 27).

77 Proposition 7 of the *Tractatus* — "What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence" (p. 74 of the Pears and McGuinness translation) — would be a more modern expression of the same tendency. Compare this with Nietzsche's aphorism in *Miscellaneous Maxims and Opinions*, p. 1: "One should only speak where one cannot remain silent . . . " (§ 1).

78 Nietzsche, *The Wanderer and His Shadow*, pp. 191–192 (§ 11). In the interest of confining the present discussion to Nietzsche's view of language, this quotation is taken somewhat out of context; the omitted material deals explicitly with the problem of free will.

79 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day*, trans. J. M. Kennedy, vol. 9 of *The Complete Works*, p. 53 (§ 47).

80 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 283 (§ 522).

81 See Wittgenstein, p. 56 (§ 5.6).

82 Nietzsche, "On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense," p. 177.

83 In Part II, Section 6 of the present series.

84 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 303 (§ 562). Paragraph divisions omitted.

85 Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, p. 481 (First Essay, § 13). This passage is also taken somewhat out of context. See also *The Will to Power*, pp. 288–289 (§ 531).

86 Benjamin Lee Whorf, *Language, Thought, and Reality*, ed. John B. Carroll (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1956), pp. 243–244.

87 William Butler Yeats, "Among School Children" in *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, ed. Richard Ellmann and Robert O'Clair (New York: W. W. Norton, 1973), pp. 140–141.

88 Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human*, pp. 21–22 (§ 11).

89 Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*, p. 96 (§ 58).

90 Whorf, p. 216.

91 *Ibid.*

92 Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, pp. 217–218 (§ 20). Paragraph divisions omitted. To what extent this idea coincides with Wittgenstein's phrase "form of life" is debatable, but a comparison of the two is suggestive.

93 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, p. 291 (§ 539).

94 Wittgenstein, p. 11 (§ 3.02).

95 Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human*, p. 27 (§ 14).

96 *Cf.* p. 119 of *The Dawn of Day* (§ 115): "Language and the prejudices upon which language is based very often act as obstacles in our paths when we proceed to explore internal phenomena and impulses: as one example, we may instance the fact that there are only words to express the superlative degrees of these phenomena and impulses. . . . It is our habit no longer to observe accurately when words fail us, since it is difficult in such cases to think with precision. . . . "

97 Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, p. 213 (§ 16).

[98] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 470 ("Maxims and Arrows," § 26).
[99] Nietzsche, *The Dawn of Day*, pp. 377–379 (§ 547).
[100] Walter Kaufmann, *Nietzsche: Philosopher, Psychologist, Antichrist* (New York: Vintage, 1968), p. 91.
[101] Nietzsche, *The Joyful Wisdom*, p. 87 (§ 51).
[102] Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human*, p. 355 (§ 483).
[103] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Antichrist*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, p. 640 (§ 55).
[104] Nietzsche, *Human, All-Too-Human*, p. 15 (§ 2).
[105] Nietzsche, *Miscellaneous Maxims and Opinions*, p. 20 (§ 20).
[106] Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*, pp. 585–586 (Third Essay, § 24).
[107] *Ibid.*, p. 586. In a note on this passage Kaufmann argues that the maxim was not derived from a similar remark made by Ivan in Dostoyevsky's *Brothers Karamazov*.
[108] Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, p. 497 ("The Four Great Errors," §5).
[109] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Columbus Redivivus" in *The Joyful Wisdom*, trans. Paul V. Cohn and Maude D. Petre, p. 367.

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