



## Nietzsche on the Value of Life and Truth

### Nietzsche'de Hayatın Değeri ve Hakikat Üzerine

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**ABSTRACT**

The present paper attempts to explore and problematize some of the prominent sides of Nietzsche's understanding of truth from a critical point of view. Nietzsche's conception of truth is modeled on the parameters of scientific relations to the world. Truth, on this assumption, is the function of objectifying reason and is grounded in the agreement between facts and propositions. When Nietzsche questions the value of truth and downplays it, he actually does that from the perspective of thus understood truth. Nietzsche also believes that the supremacy of truth in life leads to nihilism as is very much the case in the modern world and proposes Dionysian art as a remedy against truth. This reductive view of truth, I argue, proves incapable of doing justice to the multi-faceted function of truth in all spheres of human life including science and art. A more fundamental view of truth is required not only to ground the workings of objectifying reason but also to defend the value of art. Truth is actually embedded, intrinsic and operative in the immediate context of human existence (what Heidegger calls "being-in-the-world") and derives all its uses from this living context. This meaningful context as the realm of truth is the beginning of human being. It is the ground in which the artist stands and produces. It is thus what lends value and meaning to the work of art. It is likewise what makes it possible for scientific propositions to agree with facts.

**Keywords:** Value, truth, science, art, objectifying reason, nihilism

**ÖZET**

Mevcut yazı Nietzsche'nin hakikat anlayışının kimi önde gelen veçhelerini eleştirel bir bakış açısından incelemeye ve problematize etmeye teşebbüs etmektedir. Nietzsche'nin hakikat telakkisi dünya ile bilimsel bir ilişkinin parametreleri üzerine bina edilmiştir. Bu kabule göre, hakikat nesneleştirici aklın bir işlevidir ve olgular ile önermeler arasındaki mutabakatta temellenmektedir. Nietzsche hakikatin değerini sorguladığında ve onu ehemmiyetsiz bir şey saydığında, bunu gerçekte böyle bir hakikat telakkisinin bakış açısından hareketle yapar. Nietzsche, modern dünyadaki duruma bakarak, hakikatin hakimiyetinin nihilizme yol açtığına da inanır ve buna karşı Dionizyen sanatı deva olarak sunar. Bu indirgeyici hakikat görüşünün hakikatin, bilim ve sanat da dahil, insan hayatının tüm düzlemlerindeki çok-boyutlu işlevine hakkını verme noktasında açık bir şekilde yetersiz olduğunu

ileri sürüyorum. Yalnızca nesneleştirici aklın ne şekilde çalıştığını temellendirmek için değil, ama aynı zamanda sanatın değerini de savunmak için daha esaslı bir hakikat görüşüne ihtiyaç vardır. Hakikat gerçekte insan varoluşunun dolaysız bağlamına (Heidegger'in isimlendirmesiyle "dünya-da-olma") içkindir ve o burada iş başındadır, tüm işlevlerini de bu yaşayan bağlamdan alır. Hakikatin alanı olarak bu manidar bağlam insanın başlangıç noktasıdır. Burası sanatçının içinde durduğu ve ürettiği zemindir. Şu halde, sanat eserine anlam ve değerini veren zemindir o. Aynı şekilde bilimin önermelerinin olgulara tekabül etmesini de o mümkün kılar.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Değer, hakikat, bilim, sanat, nesneleştirici akıl, nihilizm

## Introduction

Nietzsche's interest in truth lies at the heart of his whole thought. In a crucial sense, he wanted to shake the modern man's reliance on truth, or rather, to destroy what he saw as an obsession with truth. He seems quite self-conscious that his approach to truth involves confrontation with the whole foundations of the meaning world of the Western tradition. Even in the earliest writings (and perhaps, as we will see, most clearly there) we can observe such a goal as central to his philosophy. He came to believe that (from the 1870s on) curing the Western culture, which he regarded as his mission, involved getting free from this preoccupation with truth, that is, with reason and metaphysics. But what was the cure? That is, how can we be saved from truth? As we shall see, this was Nietzsche's chief concern.

Nietzsche also seems to attach special importance to artistic inspiration as the creative moment of art (which perhaps signifies the Nietzschean counterpart of Schopenhauer's nirvana). The source of an artist's inspiration is earth, and not a transcendent power. This priority accorded to inspiration in life, as naturally following from the primacy of art, stands in a particular tension with the demands of truth on us which, in his mind, refers to an objective description of things (that is, correspondence between propositions and facts. More on this below). Artistic inspiration puts the man (as artist) into the heart of life and makes possible for him the highest enjoyment and disclosure of life. He believes, in this context, that art frees an imaginative relationship with life and thereby makes aesthetic moment the principal one.

Nietzsche argues that properly understood art is the tragic activity of "playing" with life. It is this character of art which represents the overcoming of the primacy of truth itself that had led the Western culture to nihilism. This invites a couple of questions to which we need to pay close attention: What was the precise character of the notion of truth which Nietzsche took to be definitive of the Western experience of things? What pathology did Nietzsche identify in it? What was essentially wrong with it? Also important in this connection is the question; what is the fundamental motivation of Nietzsche's philosophical evaluation of truth?

I also raise several questions concerning the autonomy of artistic production that Nietzsche takes almost for granted. Nietzsche's dissociating art (following Schopenhauer and Kant) from truth has much to do with this supposition of the autonomy of art, i.e. the belief that art is

essentially independent of truth. I here tend to think that this view remains unfounded and indefensible. First of all, the greatest worry here is the fact that any attempt at repudiating the place and power of truth in any sphere of human life is bound to face self-defeating results. If truth is the most important thing in human life, if the core of being human is constituted by, what one might call, an involvement with truth, then art, too, gains the whole significance it has from the point of view of its function for truth. From this perspective, exploring the relation between truth and art is something indispensable for a full appreciation of the place of art in human life. Hegel or Heidegger would say something like this. Now Nietzsche's position is irreconcilable with this sort of approach to art. The following is an attempt at critically assessing Nietzsche's basic position on the connection between art and truth.

### **Eternal Truths**

As is well known, Nietzsche, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, launches an attack on the intellectualism of Socrates, on rationality as being raised to the exclusive principle of human life. In consistency with this rejection of theoretical sense of life (thus philosophy itself, i.e., truth and knowledge as the supreme values to judge life), he employs a style of writing which rests on an intensely metaphoric and imaginative use of language, quite rare in philosophy before Nietzsche (perhaps, with the exception of Plato). Such a metaphoric and imaginative use of language gives us a first reminder that Nietzsche is not interested in setting up logical arguments, but in artistic intimations through which to direct us toward experiencing aesthetically what he means to say. This fact about Nietzsche's style of writing and philosophizing is something we should bear in mind while treating the question of truth in Nietzsche's thought. It is, I think, arguable that grasping the main reasons behind Nietzsche's opposition to conceptual thinking, to the experience of truth that lies at the foundation of Western culture, is indispensable for gaining a fundamental insight into the underlying motivations of his whole philosophical enterprise.

The primacy of concepts (of rationality), Nietzsche argues, is in conflict with the fundamental character of life; with its being a restless movement and flux, an unending struggle of vital instincts without beginning and end, goal and purpose. One might call it the Heraclitean basis of Nietzsche's philosophy. He thus feels that concepts freeze what is flowing, fixate what is temporary. This first takes place in Plato's thought; following the lead of concepts, he postulates a world of changeless, transcendent beings which gives us a systematically distorted interpretation of reality, a nought instead of life itself. This has led to the devaluation of earth and life, the concrete world we live in, in favor of nothing, that is, of a conceptually constructed world of being.

This means that the Western culture is founded upon values which have no origin in life, but are imposed on it from outside. Reason naturally tries to bring life to a standstill, to impose on life its own categories, whereby the common (the general) becomes the measure of everything. Reason works with concepts, but concepts, Nietzsche holds, cannot give us access to the particulars of the world, the individual, the real, because a concept is by nature an abstraction from the common (the similar) and therefore intellectual approach to world elevates the common to the

status of principle.<sup>1</sup> With Plato (or Socrates), as Nietzsche thinks, it appears that the centrality of the intellectual tends to situate itself against life (this world), ends up a life-negating attitude. When attention is directed toward the beyond, toward the timeless, the world of being, the result turns out to be a loss of the present, the living core of life itself. Here Nietzsche's point is based on a full emphasis on the value of the present; what should be valued is what most enables us to live life fully in the present. He adds that this presupposes a creative engagement with the present. The primacy of the intellectual (concepts) is just the opposite.

For Nietzsche, only an artistic relation to life can satisfy such criterion of creativity. When Nietzsche speaks of knowledge, reason and philosophy (in negative terms), he identifies as their very essence a drive alien and hostile to life, namely a drive to fix up things. Such a drive which is foundational for conceptual thinking is a drive to form copies (or mummies) of things by drawing them out of the living flow of life. In contrast with rationality, which copies, art needs in each case to be original, to create something new: art cannot take things as they are in themselves. Nietzsche thus should feel uneasy about *mimesis* as the essential character of artistic activity (a view that was decisive for Plato's and Aristotle's conception of art). In both Plato and Aristotle, *theoria*, by contrast, is considered to be the highest, most valuable activity of human being, whereas *tekhne* is imitative. Nietzsche suggests in *The Birth of Tragedy* that the Greek art (which is for him art *par excellence*, indeed the model he always has in mind when he speaks of art) arose from the tragic experience of life and therefore tragedy was central to the Greek sense of art. This has been lost with the ensuing trend of rationalization in the Greek (and Western) culture, a development for which he lays blame on Socrates.

But now, if we are to elevate art to the highest rank among human activities, indeed as the ownmost self-assertion of life, imagination, too, should be granted an importance that had been denied it in the metaphysical tradition. From Plato to Spinoza, it appears that imagination occupies the lowest rank in the hierarchy of human powers. Thus, as corollary of the rule of becoming, Nietzsche defends the supremacy of imagination and sense perception which consists of responding to the particular and the concrete. On the other side, theoretical knowledge grows out of a desire to reach eternally valid truths, which actually corresponds to a world brought to standstill. What we call truths are ultimately our constructions. The more we insist on their eternal validity, the more we lose sight of their origin in our human, all too human attempts at giving shape to the flux of becoming which can never provide us with anything final. The rational enterprise falsely presupposes that there is a correlation between our concepts and being. That seems to lead the metaphysician to dichotomies where intelligible is equated with the real and unintelligible with something less than real. Nietzsche dwells on many of these dichotomies in his writings: namely, becoming against being, appearance against reality, imagination against intellect, sensual against rational, passion against reason, art against truth, the particular and individual against universal (i.e. unique against common), image against concept, changing against constant, the present against eternal, tragic against sober, metaphor against proposition, body against mind, earthly

1 See, for instance, Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense", in *Philosophy and Truth*, ed. and trans. D. Breazeale (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979).

against otherworldly, power against morality, and so on.<sup>2</sup> We can see these dichotomies clearly in Plato's thought. But such dichotomies are also quite revealing for an account of Nietzsche's whole standpoint. This in turn (as will be examined below) invites us to view Nietzsche's thought as the inversion of Plato's thought, where one wonders, with Heidegger, whether Nietzsche really overcomes Platonic tradition or remains in its orbit, since an inversion, it would seem, will largely remain bound by the parameters of what is inverted.

Thus, Nietzsche's critique of Western understanding of truth is, at bottom, a critique of a philosopher's inherent propensity for concepts and propositions as tools to capture eternal truths. The philosopher appears here as a man of intellect, of reflectivity. He portrays the man of intellect as someone who is caught ensnared in the steel net of concepts while attempting to throw it over all reality. Targeting especially Plato (or Socrates) Nietzsche argues that truth is a drive against time and therefore against life: the cost is a paralysis of one's best instincts (i.e. artistic powers). He presents the philosopher as the perfect case of being blinded by such a drive against life. So, Nietzsche's critique of Western understanding of truth means also Nietzsche's critique of philosophy as "theory". As indicated, Western culture as we know it, Nietzsche thinks, has arisen precisely with the degeneration of the tragic Greek world. The main cause of this phenomenon is philosophy itself as theoretical reflection, for it encourages rational optimism (by presuming that reason and reality are commensurate) and the concomitant rational comportment toward world whose practical manifestation is an ascetic way of life. As Nietzsche notes in the article "On the Pathos of Truth" (1872):

Their journey towards immortality is more difficult and impeded than any other, and yet no one can be more confident than the philosopher that he will reach his goal. Because the philosopher knows not where to stand, if not on the extended wings of all ages. For it is the nature of philosophical reflection to disregard the present and momentary. He possesses the truth; let the wheel of time roll where it will, it will never be able to escape from the truth.<sup>3</sup>

The philosopher constructs the world into a timeless framework, in terms of a "universal schema," that is, as an all-comprehensive framing from which nothing can escape. This, Nietzsche occasionally likens to a spider spinning its web over air<sup>4</sup> where "web" seems to be a metaphor for "rational thought". He makes the same point in notes taken in 1887: "*Rational thought is interpretation according to a scheme which we cannot throw off.*"<sup>5</sup> We should read this remark together with the above quotation. Now Nietzsche's speaking of rational thought as a particular kind of "interpretation" is quite important here. This implies that, despite everything, it remains an interpretation, that is, it remains far from absolute validity. What does Nietzsche mean by "interpretation" here? Interpretation presupposes uncertainty. An interpretation, like groping one's way, should proceed

2 For a similar list, see Lawrence J. Hatab, *Nietzsche's Life Sentence* (London: Routledge, 2005), 13.

3 Nietzsche, "On the Pathos of Truth" in *Philosophy and Truth*, 63.

4 Nietzsche, "On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," 85.

5 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Vintage Books), #522.

with provisional and exploratory steps. Perhaps more importantly, interpretation looks at things inevitably from a standpoint whose ultimate presuppositions remain, to a large measure, hidden or obscure to the interpreter himself. A certain degree of opacity, therefore, remains the steering ground of interpretation. In short, philosophy as rational thought is interpretive and therefore finite and perspective-bound, just like all other interpretations. Science, too, in this sense, is a kind of interpretation, thus an activity marked, in the final analysis, by our subjective interests and finitude.<sup>6</sup>

Now passion for truth that is intrinsic to rationality and science is something poisonous to a fulfilling human existence, since, Nietzsche thinks, it works against life, that is, against meeting up to the present and the momentary. This passion for truth characterizes the metaphysician (or intellectual) who prefers living in a conceptual and abstract world over living in the real, earthly life. He misses the present and the momentary in favor of a constructed eternal, of the permanent which Nietzsche tells in the *Zarathustra* as merely “a parable.”<sup>7</sup> This means that eternity is good only as a parable, as a poetic fiction. Nietzsche’s attack on Socrates, “the archetype of theoretical man,”<sup>8</sup> that is, on the Socratic commitment to eternal truths, is premised on the conviction that Socratic attitude actually masks a hatred against life, a slave morality, a spirit of revenge.<sup>9</sup> Unable to face the temporal, the theoretical mind flees to a dead world of being, only to look at everything in time and movement with suspicion; these “great sages”, as Nietzsche calls them in *Twilight of the Idols*, end up enemies of anything shining with joy and energy and “adopt a negative attitude towards life.”<sup>10</sup> He claims that “nothing real escaped their grasp alive.”<sup>11</sup>

With the end of the tragic age, philosophy turns into dialectic, the decisive, the original form of rational thought; philosophy as we know it today has its foundation in this transformation. Nietzsche seems to consider dialectic essentially as a determination of intelligence turned against life. This reminds us of Plato’s (rather un-socratic) warning in *Republic* against the possible harms dialectic (philosophy) may inflict on the soul of young people (*Republic*, VII, 537e-539e), a pathology which, expressed in Nietzsche’s vocabulary, is indeed a sort of *ressentiment* or “the spirit of revenge”. But Nietzsche seems to be more interested in the soul-shaping function of the dialectical practices. In the dialectician, the control of intellect had to proceed coldly against the spontaneity of natural drives, the passions, and the instincts. The rational, calculative discipline gained through years of dialectical experience would come at the expense of a repressed natural side. Here then, takes place a war between the intellectual and the natural, whose playground extends increasingly to the whole culture. The victory of the intellect (represented by the figure of Socrates) meant for

6 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. by Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), sec. 12

7 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. Adrian del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), II, 66.

8 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Ronald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 72.

9 See, Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. W. Kaufmann (London: Penguin Books, 1968), “The Problem of Socrates”.

10 Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 474.

11 Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 479.

Nietzsche what he calls “decadence”, that is, debilitation of the instincts of life. This decadence showed itself in Socrates, in “the hypertrophy of [his] logical faculty.”<sup>12</sup> Both Socrates and dialectic represent for Nietzsche what is distinctively an un-Greek way of being. Yet, in ancient Greece, this illusory charm of rational thought (philosophy as ratiocinative finesse, as dialectic) has attracted the elite and captivated them, “a noble taste is thus vanquished.”<sup>13</sup> So, truth, which philosophy or dialectic thus invented, grew from out of “the spirit of revenge” against “a noble taste” actualizing the best instincts of life. This sort of approach to the philosopher is indeed implicit, and at times quite explicit, in Nietzsche’s treatment of Socrates and the Greek philosophers.<sup>14</sup>

As a result, knowledge and truth appear as parts of a rationalist optimism, associated with Socratic wisdom, which is almost a necessary shape of philosophy as the practice of conceptual thought. The Socratic wisdom (which is, in the *Zarathustra*’s words, “wake in order to sleep well”<sup>15</sup> is opposed to the “the wisdom of Silenus” that consists in openness to the abyss of life.<sup>16</sup> Perhaps, philosophy has a special magic of its own working against life: “In this teacher [read Socrates] nothing less than magic resides, and not in vain did youths sit at the feet of this preacher of virtue.”<sup>17</sup> This calls to mind a section (called “on science”) in the final part of the *Zarathustra*, where “the conscientious man” attacks “the magician” (read the philosopher in this case) who lures the free spirits:

Thus sang the magician; and all who were together went unwittingly, like birds,  
into the net of his cunning and melancholy rapture. Only the conscientious of spirit  
was not captured; he snatched the harp away from the magician and cried: “Air!  
Let in the good air! Let Zarathustra in! You make this cave sultry and poisonous,  
you wicked old magician!

You seduce us, you faker, you fine one, to unknown desires and wildernesses. And  
watch out when such as you start making speeches and fuss about truth!

Woe to all free spirits who are not on their guard for such magicians! Their freedom  
is done for: you teach and tempt us back into prisons –

You old melancholy devil, out of your lament rings a bird call; you resemble those  
who secretly incite sexual desires with their praise of chastity!<sup>18</sup>

12 Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 475.

13 Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 475.

14 See especially the following texts: *Twilight of the Idols*, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, “Philosophy in Hard Times”, “The Struggle between Science and Wisdom” (the latter two texts are in the *Philosophy and Truth*). But Nietzsche is hardly the enemy of philosophy as such; he demands a transformed way of doing philosophy, perhaps a form of philosophy not interested any more in the seriousness of truth, thus not interested in logical consistency either. He alludes to this in *Beyond Good and Evil* (sec. 203). In the same section of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche sets his high hopes on this new type of “philosophers” to carry out the reevaluation of all values. He, I think, refers to Zarathustra of the *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (that is, to himself!), as artist-thinker who thinks everything beyond good and evil.

15 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I, 19.

16 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 22-23.

17 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, I, 19.

18 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, IV, 245.

Truth and prison! The prison of the modern subject? The truth that Nietzsche finds paradigmatic in the workings of Western tradition, in its making sense of the world is, as suggested, the truth of concepts which finally leads up to the constitution of modern subject (from Descartes to Hegel), with which consciousness comes to be the ground and measure of reality. Life itself, meanwhile, turns into an external world for the subject who strives to make sure that it really exists, an external world yet not accessible, thus remaining forever something external. An introverted reflection striving to capture and secure the ultimate grounds of things (eternal truths), to represent things under complete constancy (*sub specie aeternitatis*, as Spinoza would say) has given rise to ever increasing withdrawal from the concrete life (perhaps the tale of the absent-minded Thales gives us its first signal). In a sense, philosopher (or the whole philosophical tradition) as increasingly introverted spectator is caught up in a process of building a prison for himself, and henceforth is unable to exit it, unable to respond to life in its particularity. This dream for eternal truths whose framework is grounded in a theoretical, consciousness-based relation to the world has ended up in the closed-box of consciousness. Socratic wisdom has ended up in the Cartesian universe of the modern mind.<sup>19</sup> Thus young Nietzsche (as an ardent follower of Schopenhauer) notes:

This would be man's faith if he were nothing but a knowing animal; the truth would drive him to despair and destruction: the truth that he is eternally condemned to untruth. But all that is proper for man is belief in attainable truth, in the illusion which draws near to man and inspires him with confidence. Does he not actually live by means of continual process of deception? Does nature not conceal most things from him, even the nearest things-- his own body, for example, of which he has only a deceptive "consciousness"? He is locked within this consciousness, and nature threw away the key. Oh the fatal curiosity of the philosopher, who longs, just once, to peer out and down through a crack in the chamber of consciousness.<sup>20</sup>

In fact, each word here, in the penultimate paragraph of "On the Pathos of Truth", needs careful examination. That man is a being of illusion, that consciousness does not make life any clearer, but rather it is the darkest self-concealment of nature to man, that truth is not the most important thing in life are to be noted first. What matters for man, rather, is fittingness to life, which Nietzsche more precisely understands as fittingness for art, that is, a creative-tragic openness to the challenge of life. Instead, Nietzsche thinks, we have to discover ourselves as aesthetic subjects even in dealing with truth and see that in the origin we always find man, and find him as artist and everything else as his fiction, illusion, and creation. A life devoted to truth as the ultimate value would be a life next to death, hence Plato's indication in the *Phaedo*, namely philosophy as practicing death (*Phaedo*, 80e-81a). This, Nietzsche argues, is the expression of the rule of death,

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19 Cf. Nietzsche, "On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense".

20 Nietzsche, "On the Pathos of Truth," 65.



of nothingness, of nihilism, which science, no less than philosophy, shares.<sup>21</sup> “Will to truth” he writes in *The Gay Science*, “that might be a concealed will to death.”<sup>22</sup>

The philosopher started by opposing being (concepts) to becoming (life) and ended up imprisoned in the chamber of consciousness. Becoming is not just a dull flux, but an unending creative struggle of life which produces something new in each case. There is no stable order to things to be abstracted by reason. There are no enduring self-same entities and likewise no eternal truths; as indicated, the permanent is merely parable. Nietzsche, in fact, affirms the willfulness behind the scientific enterprise of Western humanity, but denounces its tendency to view the world in terms of time-free schemes (truths). Truths as truths about life do change as life changes: “‘change’ belongs to the essence, therefore also temporality.”<sup>23</sup> We need to rule out truth altogether if we cannot ascribe any degree of stability to things. So, truth does not make sense if we do not ascribe some degree of stability to things. Accordingly, each proposition masquerades as an eternally valid representation of things, as grasping the eternally unchanging. This commitment to truth (say, “Socratic wisdom”) rests on freezing things in time which is, again, “ill-will against time”, that is, “spirit of revenge.”<sup>24</sup> Rather, one needs to respond to life in its own terms, that is, tragically, creatively, artistically, instinctually. The tragic element in art is crucial for the life-affirming function of art precisely because the tragic represents openness to the abyss and darkness of life. We are genuinely in life when we are artistically involved in its dark, uncertain play, i.e. when we respond to it by playing, by the artistic play of imagination. The artist makes the world into an object before the playing of his imaginative powers, a material of this playing since solely by means of this creative suspension of the world done by the artist the world gets all the worth it can ever get; life thereby becomes bearable. The world in Nietzsche’s sense turns into material before artistic activity and gets its form and reality in a work of art that the artist brings to presence. But this, too, is only transient. And most importantly, as an artist I live and create in a world of dream and imagination, and do not care about its concrete reality.

Nietzsche, briefly stated, wants to raise a playing relationship with life to the status of principle, hence the importance of “illusion” and “delusion” (from *ludo*, play) that turn into creative forces in the artistic production. Playing as a necessary suspension of the everyday, of reality, of a conceptual interest in the world, renders the world into a playground, an aesthetic phenomenon, chiefly by way of liberating imagination. Heraclitus is reported to have said; “time (*aeon*) is a child at play; the kingdom belongs to a child” (Diels-Kranz B52). Nietzsche calls attention to this metaphor of child in *The Birth of Tragedy*.<sup>25</sup> Children are marked by a peculiar freedom to follow their instincts and by a peculiar love as well as need for playing. In another fragment, Heraclitus likens the deity to a child, the deity which governs becoming, world destruction and generation. “...the rule is in the child” “the world is the game child plays”. The core of the earth is like a child;

21 Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality*, trans. Carol Diethe (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), III, sec. 25.

22 Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, trans. W. Kaufmann (London: Vintage Books, 1974), 282.

23 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, # 1064.

24 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, II, 111.

25 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 114.

ruleless, free, imaginative, instinctual, wild, pitiless, and also forgetful. It is the artist who is connected with this core of the earth in the most intimate way, i.e. through “playing with seriousness.”<sup>26</sup> “In this world only play, play as artists and children engage in it, exhibits” the rule of the temporal, i.e., “coming to be and passing away, generation and destruction without any moral additive, in forever equal innocence”.<sup>27</sup> It was just this “playing” character of the aesthetical which Kierkegaard, with motivations quite opposed to Nietzsche’s, finds poisonous to the seriousness of human existence debasing it into a sphere of playing. This seriousness, Nietzsche would insist, stems from attaching to things a value, which is not our own creation. There the voice of truth speaks and claims me as a bounded being, and thus as a responsible being. Nietzsche is reluctant to subject human aesthetic freedom to any independent or intrinsic measure transcending our will. This ends up, he presumes, negating ourselves and life.

Even though Nietzsche preserves the Schopenhaurian (and thus Kantian) background of his thought in metaphysical and epistemological respects, we know that he later vehemently rejects Schopenhauer’s pessimism. In his “An Attempt at Self-Criticism”, which he later added to *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche intimates how much his “taste” has grown opposed to Schopenhauer,<sup>28</sup> who is still, it seems, very much under the sway of “the pathos of truth” as an emphasis on morality.<sup>29</sup> Accordingly, while Schopenhauer consults asceticism as the only viable option to cope with the evilness of reality, of primal energy (*Wille*), Nietzsche, on the contrary, wants to leave this pessimism behind by saying “yes” to this tragic play of life through artistic self-assertion which introduces the dimension of creativity to life. He sees asceticism as part of a Platonic-Christian search for the transcendent truths, as part of Platonic-Christian experience of truth and of its negation of life. Nietzsche detects at the foundation of modern science, too, the definitive role played by such a hatred and alienation to life originating from the commitment to truth that determines the Platonic-Christian tradition.

On closer inspection, Nietzsche, it appears, attacks the search for abstract truths. Now, the artist creates his own (concrete) truth, when he creates each new work, and this from out of life; a tasted truth (as opposed to an abstract one), so to speak, a truth produced through the instincts. This implies that it is only as artists that we can give meaning to the world, to our lives. Crucial is the assertion that metaphysics becomes legitimate only as art and art is metaphysics proper. Art; “the highest task, the true metaphysical activity of this life.”<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche interprets the essence of this metaphysical activity as the only source of truths and values (or better, truth only as value in the service of life) is “will to power”. “Will to power” is, in fact, the highest instinct of life now raised to the status of principle, which mandates that life shall not be in the service of truth, but just the reverse. The world thus appears not as the instantiation of eternal truths but as an aesthetic sphere, before the man as artist, thus as a world to be created and re-created by the willful artistic

26 Nietzsche, “On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense”, 91.

27 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, trans. M. Cowan (Washington: Regnery Publishing, 1962), 62.

28 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 10.

29 Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 491, 527-8.

30 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 14.

venture. One should notice here the striking parallel to Fichte's understanding of the world with the key difference that the aesthetical moment in Nietzsche replaces (and cancels) the ethical one. To be sure, Fichte's position can be traced back to the idea which Kant explicates in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (but actually has its real foundation in the notion of subjectivity articulated in Kant's first critique and in Descartes' *res cogitans*), namely the idea that moral norms have their ground in the autonomy of the subject which makes him a self-legislative power. In Nietzsche, this self-legislation turns into an unconditioned will to create new values and, correspondingly, the transcendental subject turns into the aesthetical subject (more on this below).

Nietzsche's human being as aesthetical subject is just another sort of animal, one which is more interested in illusion, lies, deception (including self-deception) than in the truth of things, and even when he thinks that he seeks truth. Art releases us to an appropriation of this underlying reality. Thus, he can say that art is recovery from truth: "We possess art lest we perish of the truth."<sup>31</sup> In fact, ultimate truth about our universe is something we would never like to know; it is utter emptiness and meaninglessness (roughly, Schopenhauer's reality). And art makes it possible to endure this abysmal reality by creating beautiful illusions. It follows that we cannot evade nihilism in so far as we attempt to take the world as it is in itself, that is, in terms of a commitment to objectivity, which is the presupposition of rationality and sciences. We must add the dimension of subjective creativity to our encounter with life as a determinative force, which is, to repeat, possible nowhere but in art. Art, unlike reason, does not produce static, timeless truths, but temporary creative experiences which give us satisfaction, which make the world a more bearable place. In point of fact, what matters for us is not abstract truths, but more and more satisfaction from life, a life lived as much as possible. A kind of hedonism through art seems to be an element of Nietzsche's thought which is fundamentally what urges him to put the dominance of truth (in the Western tradition) into question. Notice also that Schopenhauer's ontology serves as a starting point for Nietzsche, but he is not happy with Schopenhauer's asceticism.

To recapitulate, what conceptual thinking is to being, art is to becoming. In accord with much of the metaphysical tradition (from Parmenides to Spinoza), being here is understood in terms of strict permanence and therefore is rejected. In a sense, truth is the function of being. Fixating the flux of becoming, giving an order to this original chaos, this will is truth. Where truth represents a conceptual relation to life imposing an artificial constancy on it by means of universal propositions, art gives expression to it as moment, rather than a timeless order. As opposed to reason and knowledge, art is aware of the fact that movement and change remain supreme, that the rule of the time is invincible. The will to eternal truths thus is an ill-will against time, that is, against the present and the moment. The quest for truth as quest for eternally valid principles, (a quest which is the function of rational comportment toward world) loses the life found only in the present, the moment and in the particular. Nietzsche interprets this will for fixation as something morbid and essentially destructive for the interests of life.

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31 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, # 822.

Crucial here is Nietzsche's suggestion that the values of modernity arise from this will, especially apparent in philosophy and science as rational interpretations of the world. Here the aim ultimately is to lay out a conceptual framework of becoming. Like Heidegger who views art as the presentation of the earth, Nietzsche construes art as releasing the natural; art presupposes an affirmation of the natural as such, both in ourselves and in the things. The drive to truth, however, represents an opposition to this, because it consists of unfolding the logic of being that is itself pure conceptuality, thus ending up a dead construct, a representation of life in abstract structures. It seems that Nietzsche's interpretation of truth proceeds from thus conceived being. Only when recognized in the temporariness of becoming, life is restored to its authentic liveliness. God as the pinnacle of the whole narrative of "being" would then be a dead construct. The expression "god is dead" also means that such a god has no place in the ceaseless self-denying and self-overcoming renewal of becoming. Nietzsche is calling attention to the fact that the Christian god is placed beyond any possible realm of becoming and change. In this scheme of things, we might say, god is posited, first of all, as the freezing principle of the world (i.e., as the metaphysical ground of being). We should, however, note that the god which Nietzsche rejects sounds very much like an artifice of Platonic-Aristotelian theological premises. This is obviously not the god that gives direction and meaning to the world of any pious person. According to Nietzsche, the Western value system is built upon a strict correlation between being and truth, where the former appears as god and the latter as the full intelligibility of the world (a world, too much chaotic otherwise).

In Nietzsche's view, thus, truth represents an unnatural, an illegitimate intervention in life, a distracting pause: "all our organs of knowledge and our senses are developed only with regard to the conditions of preservation and growth,"<sup>32</sup> that is, conditions of preservation and growth of life. If values are not such conditions, they are nothing. Life requires and is based on the unity of affective and imaginative practices, which is art. So to speak, our cognitive powers are designed in such a way that we may become artists, rather than scientists or intellectuals.<sup>33</sup> They are fulfilled only in their artistic employment and execution which have their own rules and standards. Nietzsche thus comes to ask; if we have art, why need truth? He claims that we do not need truth in itself, but only as an instrument for life, i.e. for the (artistic) self-assertion of will. This quasi-pragmatic understanding of truth goes together with another (somewhat normative) assertion that the only legitimate form of truth must be the product of artist's playing with his objects. That is, the only legitimate room recognized for an engagement with truth is an artistic one, in which artist creates truth in the service of life, in the service of will to power. If in each case truth is to be judged with respect to life, this means that truth is legitimate only to the extent of its use in the service of life. Given that truth is perspectival, rather than absolute, we have to ask ourselves which perspective is really justified for the ownmost interests of life; it can only be the one which serves for "will to power", Nietzsche maintains. Abstract truths, then, reflect looking at a world from the perspective of empty nothingness. In other words, truth, in its legitimate form, is the "value" (i.e. use and function) of such a perspective for life. Everything here hinges on this "perspectivism," which is

32 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, # 505.

33 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, # 496.

yet, on a philosophical plane, is inevitably self-undermining. Now let me complete my analysis with some critical observations.

### Platonism Inverted

To be sure, artistic creation of truth is, by nature, not performed with concepts and representations and the outcome is not propositions and generalities. For Nietzsche, it is a creative and imaginative playing with the ultimate potentials of the world for the self-assertion of will and life, which comes to its highest expression in the artistic work. It is also evident that Nietzsche takes art as the self-assertion of will in the highest sense. And will is the inner essence of life. In Nietzsche's writings, such a decision concerning the nature of art goes unquestioned. It would be no exaggeration to say that the artist, with his overly subjectivistic mission, appears as a godlike figure (*Übermensch*), and indeed art appears to fill the gap left with the death of God.

It is also important to remember that Nietzsche (following Schopenhauer) thinks that in our search for truths there is a dark element. We are never self-transparent. Reason is but a plaything before the dark forces which prevail in us and which form our reality. These forces are animal in nature. They can be given full release in the artist's Dionysiac struggle. Indeed, they can be made creative through this struggle. Where Schopenhauer argues that they are the source of all suffering and misery in the human life and therefore espouses the ascetic ideal, Nietzsche wants to affirm our animal reality as the source of all of our vital instincts, which, he believes, are put to work in the artistic struggle. A truth-seeking life has to clash with our bodily nature, with our sensuality which would disrupt the functioning of intellectual gaze in various ways. Thus, we see in Plato's *Phaedo*, for instance, that truth requires that reason and soul be freed from the obscuring and confusing intervention of the body to accomplish the supreme clarity it demands. As pointed out, a suppressed body /animal is the price we pay for abstract truths. And the body is a dark world. For Plato, our access to eternal truths involves purification from our animal side that fetters us, given that my reality is my soul precisely in contradistinction to my body. The search for truth (i.e., philosophy) becomes a continuous struggle against the body. Nietzsche, by contrast, argues (in line with Schopenhauer) that my reality is simply my body. Nevertheless, one should notice that Nietzsche does not reject Plato's basic conviction that the body is a dark world. Rather, on this very Platonic basis, Nietzsche comes to think that man, in its reality, is a dark (and tragic) being and so is all life. Why not emancipate the body (this abysmal core of life) instead of suppressing it? In almost all aspects of Nietzsche's thought can one discover his inversion of Platonism. The same thing, as indicated, can be observed in the case of the opposition between art and truth (philosophy), too.

Here we reach the crux of Nietzsche's thought, that is, the fact that it presents itself as an "inverted Platonism", by Nietzsche's own admission.<sup>34</sup> This issue invites several questions which

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34 In one of the early sketches of *The Birth of Tragedy*, Nietzsche admits this saying that: "meine Philosophie *ungedrehter Platonismus*: je weiter ab vom wahrhaft Seienden, um so reiner schöner besser ist es. Das leben im Schein als Ziel" (My philosophy, *inverted Platonism*: the further removed from true being, the purer, the more beautiful, the better it is. Living in semblance as goal) (KSA 7: 199). The view is also defended, among others, by Heidegger.

might help us better make sense of Nietzsche's experience of truth. First, if this is so, Nietzsche's thought should be considered as thoroughly reactive, and not genuinely fundamental. Plato, as is known, moves with a sort of dualism, opposing soul to body. His philosophy rests, in a sense, on a clear-cut dichotomy between reason and instinct (*Republic* is the key text here). Plato conceives of being in contradistinction to change and becoming. And so is with the cases of reality and appearance, philosophy and art, rationality and sensuality and so on. In all these cases, to the extent that one aims at a mere inversion, one is inevitably precluded from raising the question whether the dichotomies posited here are really justifiable. Thus, the ontological premises underlying these dichotomies go unquestioned. In this case, one simply affirms the presuppositions that constitute the ground of Plato's thinking, which is to say that one moves in the same ground of basic presuppositions as Plato, which, in turn, makes it difficult to identify any "essential" difference. Nietzsche's objection is not fundamental enough.

Second, Nietzsche categorically rejects Plato's views concerning soul, its immortality, eternal truths, primacy of reason and so on. And his position is admittedly founded upon this rejection. But, to be sure, Plato has not merely propounded these ideas arbitrarily. He instead, strove to develop them with good arguments; he gives reasons, which one might reject, but this, too, requires in turn to be done with good reasons. Nietzsche does not seem to be altogether clear about these "reasons". There is some evidence that he takes the results of modern natural sciences as refuting all metaphysics, and above all Platonic arguments.<sup>35</sup> Kant's indirect influence (more on this below) is also to the point. Kant confines the intelligibility of any talk about the world to the sphere of science, with the result that all traditional metaphysics is actually empty talk. But Kantian epistemological premises prove least convincing when they model all "knowing" in terms of science. Whether sciences can really provide grounds for refuting a philosophical view remains open to question.

In point of fact, we cannot find in Nietzsche any "argument" against Platonic premises. But this is a curious problem, because Nietzsche provides us no argument about anything at all; He simply rejects thinking in terms of arguments. All we can say perhaps is that he wants to artistically ("poetically") gesture us towards phenomena. He thereby puts into question the legitimacy of thinking in terms of arguments, which is part of his critique of a reason-based worldview. But even if this idea is philosophically interesting, one will surely doubt whether we can entirely dispense with arguments and still remain philosophically relevant.

Third, Nietzsche's approach always runs the risk of being self-undermining. Sometimes Nietzsche exhibits an eliminativist attitude towards truth and other times argues in a way that

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35 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human, All Too Human*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), sec. 29. For a useful account of positivistic ideas in Nietzsche's middle period (particularly in *Human All Too Human*), see Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 95-7. Clark's work also provides a good account of the evolution of Nietzsche's thought on truth. For Nietzsche's positivism, see also J. Cohen, "Nietzsche's Fling with Positivism" in *Nietzsche, Epistemology and Philosophy of Science*. Against the large literature in the Anglo-American World arguing for a positivism in Nietzsche, see a dissenting account, Nadeem, J. Z. Hussein (2004), "Nietzsche's Positivism", *European Journal of Philosophy*, 12 (3), 326-368.

gives the impression that he only wants to minimize the role of truth in human life. In the former sense, when he speaks of truth as untruth, truth as meaningless and empty universe, truth as dismal (unless it is transformed aesthetically), truth as artificial construct, as illusion, this poses a threat to his own position as well, since Nietzsche with this thesis maintains a claim to truth (not to mention the necessity that he would need to defend this position with reason and argument). Hence, a sort of “liar’s paradox” seems to be inherent in Nietzsche’s approach to truth.<sup>36</sup> Interestingly enough, he comes face to face with this problem in the second part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, in the section titled “On Poets”. Zarathustra/Nietzsche, in the section “Upon the Blessed Isles,” seems to dismiss all talk about transcendent truths as poetical parables declaring “and the poets lie too much.”<sup>37</sup> Upon the disciple’s insistence why Zarathustra said so, he wildly reacts asserting that Zarathustra is not interested in the question “why” and, least of all, in consistency. Since Zarathustra values, above all else, self-overcoming, he does not feel bound by what he said previously. He then adds: “Zarathustra, too, is a poet.”<sup>38</sup> Crucial here is that Zarathustra (or Nietzsche) values lying, as opposed to truth, for he finds that the artistic consists of lying and deception, in creating “illusions.” Note that Nietzsche is one with Plato in thinking of art against truth. But how can he defend “lying” in response to the disciple’s question? Would not he need an appeal to truth for a defense? Worse is the very fact that lying always proves itself to be parasitical on truths. We all need truth, and perhaps more than anyone else the liars themselves need it.

Besides, Nietzsche’s understanding of art is (at best) high-flown. But in fact, this exaggerated mission placed on art proves to be too heavy a burden for it, a burden which threatens to disintegrate art and thereby obscures its real import for our life. Above all, how can a profoundly dismal world be converted into a positive realm of experience? He would answer; only in and through artistic transfiguration (through, in Arthur Danto’s words, a “transfiguration of the commonplace”). It remains rather wishful to ascribe to art that sort of power. But, more importantly, what justifies us to first assume that things are simply commonplace prior to the artist’s touch? Obviously, only with this assumption can one grant artist’s touch a godlike significance. Nietzsche exaggerates and misplaces the potentials of art when he speaks of it, as though it were in possession of a magic touch (or king Midas’ golden touch) on an essentially abysmal reality.

Nietzsche wants to overcome the primacy of truth by restoring it to the truth of organism, to un-truth. And it is art which is capable of and charged with this mission of driving truth away from life. We might ask, however; can art dispense with truth where even lying, deception and illusion-making depend on truth? With Heidegger, I would claim that without the primacy of truth a work of art would lose much of its value for us, would degenerate into an object of entertainment. Put otherwise, it would be impossible for human beings to find any value in works of art if they did not experience in it, first of all, a disclosure of truth for their individual and shared existence. This, however, seems to presuppose that the constitution of the human being is not understandable without reference to truth. Man, as Aristotle observes, is instinctively a truth-

36 For a similar charge, see M. Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, Chapter 1.

37 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, II, 66.

38 Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, II, 99.

seeker. Aristotle points toward this when he states at the very beginning of *Metaphysics* that a desire to know/ understand characterizes our nature more than anything else. This would imply that man's desire to understand puts its stamp on anything he does, including works of art he creates. Thinking then somehow lies always in the background of an artistic activity and as such functions as a hidden force in its movement; artist interprets things! Althusser speaks of the spontaneous philosophy of the scientist. Similarly, one might also speak of the spontaneous philosophy (or metaphysics) of the artist. However, just as science needs operating on the basis of some basic shared background assumptions (Kuhn calls it "paradigm") which it, as long as it remains a science, is not capable of questioning, so does art need such a set of background meanings to start with in the first place. If so, artist remains somehow dependent on truth.

It would then seem that art (contra Nietzsche) cannot replace thinking but remains somehow dependent on it. This thinking need not be of a calculative or objectifying sort. Thus, the artist cannot help himself start with a set of meanings and truths. In consequence, Nietzsche's two closely interconnected tacit assumptions appear highly questionable: (1) art can save us from nihilism. On the contrary, in fact, art, too, can degenerate into nihilism and serve for its purposes (which is actually the case with much of modern art). Nietzsche is aware of this when he, in his latest writings, severely criticizes Wagner's late music as nihilistic.<sup>39</sup> (2) Art can be immune from thinking and, as such, self-sufficient. To the contrary, art is perhaps best appreciated as an important sphere of our engagement with meaning that reveals humans as meaning-seekers. From this point of view, it seems impossible not to agree with Hegel and Heidegger that art cannot be wholly naturalized.

### Truth as objectivity

In light of the foregoing discussion, we will, I suppose, need a closer look at the phenomenon of truth. As is stated, Nietzsche acts with the presupposition that truth is a matter of objective representation of beings in propositions. But what does it mean for a subject to represent an object in statements? This is, at the very least, a very obscure claim. How can corresponding to an object be possible for a statement? This requires many conditions to be fulfilled. I should stand in a world of meanings to make sense of an "object" in the first place. An isolated subject is an impossibility. Besides having a meaningful world, a history and a society, a subject must also be capable of sustaining this world of meanings, of keeping it open. That is, he must be capable of not just working with received meanings, but also of forming and re-forming new ones, of actively engaging in the production of meanings of things. This requires the ability of understanding and thinking as built into our constitution such that we transcend, in our meaning acts, all beings. To make sense of things we bring our world of meaning as well as our cognitive capacities to our relation to things. This presupposes our situatedness in the whole context of a disclosed world of meanings and our capacity to engage with these meanings.

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39 *Nietzsche contra Wagner*, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, 661-683. See also Jonathan Cohen, "Nietzsche's Musical Conception of Time" in *Nietzsche on Time and History*, 305-307.



This is also to say that we engage with truth first and already in our pre-predicative meaning acts; truth is not something we can simply go to *a posteriori*. We first have truth so that in its light we can discover things. Heidegger in *Being and Time* argues that the task of philosophical thinking is one of explicating this given truth which is what makes us human. Thus it is in the light of this truth (as “originary meaningfulness of the world”) that things meaningfully **appear** to us, and this truth cannot be just a by-product of any “appearing” of things, for it is presupposed by the possibility of any appearing at all. It is what opens a world for us; our world is necessarily a world of truth in which it is first possible for us to engage with truth and meaning. This puts into question Nietzsche’s decision on truth (based largely on Kant) as objectivity (or correspondence).

Heidegger finds this view of truth as resting on dubious assumptions and not as fundamental enough. It can at best be called correctness (*Richtigkeit*). Heidegger thus rejects the correspondence theory of truth as the fundamental account of truth, in favor of the view that a world of meanings, as a historical world, is the pre-condition of the possibility of all meaning acts, of all engagement with truth characterizing human beings. Before a subject can reach an object, he must traverse a space of meaning, which is the disclosedness of a world as a historical space of meaning. In doing so, Heidegger would think, Dasein enacts its transcendence from nature or from the sphere of entities. A human being’s understanding of Being, i.e. our whole a priori engagement with meaning and truth, reflects a transcendence which defies any form of naturalism. But such understanding of Being is deeply historical. Truth, in this fundamental sense, is what informs the frame of ontological significations of a historical world as a shared background context which assigns meaning to everything we say and do.

From Heidegger’s perspective, when Nietzsche opposes truth and art, he, in so doing, not only fails to understand our relation to truth, but also, inescapably, to the phenomenon of art itself which cannot be detached from truth. Nietzsche’s attempt then amounts to distorting the true character of both art and truth. He makes it an area of fulfillment of aesthetic hedonism, of self-assertion of “will to power”, and thereby turns it into a means for the gratification and sublimation of our (supposed) subjective powers. In this way, Nietzsche’s thought is representative of the modern approach to art which conceives of a work of art merely as an aesthetic object and takes it away from its source in the disclosure of things, in truth. Heidegger also adds that setting out to overcome the nihilism of the Western culture, Nietzsche’s thought, ironically, ends up becoming its climax.<sup>40</sup>

Heidegger would agree with Nietzsche in the latter’s negative attitude towards the role of conceptual relation to the world but would reject this being considered as the fundamental sense of truth. Thus, Heidegger would agree with Nietzsche’s insistence that the price we pay for concepts is the concreteness of things given us in direct experience, thus a world immensely reduced in reality. Nietzsche emphasizes the role of metaphors to do justice to the concrete reality (earth) encountered in sense perception:

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40 See especially Heidegger’s essay “Nietzsche’s Word: “God is Dead”” in *Off the Beaten Track*, trans. J. Young and K. Haynes (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

The drive toward the formation of metaphors is the fundamental human drive, which one cannot for a single instant dispense with in thought, for one would thereby dispense with man himself. This drive is not truly vanquished and scarcely subdued by the fact that a regular and rigid new world is constructed as its prison from its own ephemeral products, the concepts.<sup>41</sup>

Nietzsche saw this nihilism of objectifying reason, but wrongly attributed it to, what one might call, the rule of truth in the Western tradition, presupposing that truth is simply the adequacy of concepts to things. In other words, Nietzsche sees the best illustration of truth in scientific rationality, in the objectivism of science. Here it also appears that there would be no Nietzsche without Kantian epistemology; an entirely mute world, a world divorced from truth and only accessible to the aesthetical touch of genius artist. The presupposition of the Kantian epistemology, however, is the world as it is experienced and represented by the modern science, where I find it difficult not to agree with Weber's insistence that modern science, with respect to its epistemological and social constitution, has nothing to do with "meaning".<sup>42</sup> Among others, Heidegger's account, too, involves the same conclusion. Heidegger's point here deserves to be taken into consideration: Kant's transcendental account of human experience sidesteps both the world of meaning and our meaning-making practices in it, in favor of a self-enclosed, monad-like subjectivity, that is, in favor of an immanence of subjectivity. This suggests that science becomes possible, that is, "meaningful", only in a frame of meaning (of goals, interests and projects) we bring to it from our meaning universe.

Also interesting in this context is the crucial place of inspiration in Nietzsche's thought and its relation to truth. Nietzsche, from the beginning of his philosophical life to the very end, operates with the centrality of inspiration for art and for all creativity (including philosophy), thus, we can assume, for truth as well. This appears strikingly in *Ecce Homo*, where he seems to recognize inspiration as the ultimate ground of all creative works.<sup>43</sup> "A thought", writes Nietzsche, "lights up in a flash, with necessity, without hesitation as to its form." And he adds "I never had any choice."<sup>44</sup> In the same book, Nietzsche describes the way the idea of "eternal recurrence" and the *Zarathustra* came to him.<sup>45</sup> In *Beyond Good and Evil*, he suggests that "a thought comes when 'it' wants, and not when 'I' want."<sup>46</sup> It is not me as a "subject" who determines the coming of thoughts. But quite early, already in *The Birth of Tragedy*, one can see that the whole background of the book is informed by an urge to regain inspiration to life as a fundamental (i.e. creative) force. He, in the opening part of *The Birth of Tragedy*, highly esteems and even sanctifies our imaginative capacities as enabling us a creative engagement with life. It is in this spirit that he emphasizes the

41 Nietzsche, "On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense," 88-89.

42 Max Weber, "Science as a Vocation", in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H. H. Geerth and C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), 143.

43 Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols and the Other Writings*, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 126.

44 Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 126.

45 Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*, 67.

46 Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, sec. 17.

role of dreams and intoxication in the artistic achievement. In a sense, the transfiguration of the commonplace is the gift of the inspired moment. But the predominance of objectifying reason, as is the case with Western tradition, and, with modernity in particular, blunts these artistic powers and results in a debilitated relation to life. Nietzsche thus intimates that as a rupture from the ordinary, inspiration brings the extra-ordinary to our space of meaning. In this sense, it is the re-revolutionary moment in our relatedness to life.<sup>47</sup> Through inspiration the earth bursts forth into the human realm.

Stated rather simply, Nietzsche seems to think that if inspiration is the central phenomenon of creative-artistic experience of life and if inspiration in principle has no place in the strict mechanic of scientific, objectifying relation to the world, it is simply irreconcilable with the objectivism of truth. Once again it should be noted that Nietzsche opposes truth because he identifies it with representational truth, with the truth presupposed by objectifying reason. In this sense, he can say “Truth is the kind of error without which a certain species of life could not live.”<sup>48</sup> Truth is reduced here to a survival value; it is evaluated, as Heidegger puts it, as “a necessary value yet not the highest value.”<sup>49</sup> As Nietzsche sees quite acutely and affirms, to take truth as merely something instrumental (for life), or contingent on “will to power” (say, a matter of strategy for the interests of “will to power”<sup>50</sup>), is to downplay it. In that case, it does not have its own justification independently in itself, but in the will to power as the highest and defining expression of life. Art is the principal area for the execution of this will to power and as such it is a vital “kind of cult of the untrue”<sup>51</sup> without which “the realization of general untruth and mendaciousness ... would be utterly unbearable.”<sup>52</sup> Art makes it into an aesthetic phenomenon and thereby something “bearable for us”. For that reason “only as an aesthetic phenomenon is existence and the world eternally justified.”<sup>53</sup> In keeping with this, an unconditional devotion to truth is what Nietzsche takes to be nihilism itself; it “stands in a hostile and destructive relationship to the world.”<sup>54</sup>

As we have seen, Nietzsche’s aesthetic view of truth has pretensions to invalidating the importance of truth, but it simply proves self-defeating. I thus drew attention to the point that an attack on truth, whether in the sense of correspondence between statements and facts or in Heidegger’s sense as the unconcealedness of beings, as the originary meaningfulness of the world (and, likewise, any derogation of it) is inherently unable to justify itself philosophically. Obviously enough, we depend on truth not only in all doing and acting, in making propositions, but also in lying, in making semblances, in all sorts of deceptions. “Truth lives on in the midst of deception”, remarks

47 Cf. Giorgio de Chirico, “Meditations of a Painter”, available <https://www.lexandermag.org/giorgio-de-chirico-two-essays-on-metaphysical-art-and-selected-poetry/>, date of access 13.07. 2017.

48 Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, # 493.

49 Martin Heidegger, *Nietzsche*, ed. D. F. Krell and trans. J. Stambaugh, D. F. Krell, F. Capuzzi (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), vol. III, 56.

50 As he puts it quite simply; “The criterion of truth resides in the enhancement of the feeling of power” (*The Will to Power*, # 534).

51 Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 163.

52 Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, 163.

53 Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, 72, 152.

54 Nietzsche, “On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense,” 92.

Schiller in *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*, and he continues “from the copy, the original will once again be restored”.<sup>55</sup> Deception, Schiller intimates, cannot but be parasitical on truth. Nietzsche sometimes defends the subordination of truth to art, to the will to power: all values of life must be determined not by rationality, but by artistic will and creativity, which means, by a “cult of the untrue”. This is also inevitably self-defeating, if its point is to demand the untrue instead of the true, as the ground of our life. That can make sense only as a will for the destruction of truth, which would in turn mean willing the destruction of what makes us human.

But Nietzsche’s fundamental error is his implicit identification of truth with scientific rationality. Against Nietzsche’s assertion that modernity represents the dominance and primacy of truth in life, one might make the opposite claim that truth is not really given enough attention in the modern world and this is the whole problem. The modern life is threatened not by the dominance of truth, but, instead, of its simulacra. A life in which concern for truth is not central enough would turn out to be insufficiently human. Likewise, a meaningful life cannot be built upon semblance (*Schein*). Art devoted to this end would amount to self-deception. A meaningful life, it seems, must recognize a significant space for reflective activity as commitment to truth. Therefore, Nietzsche’s attempt at opposing art to truth and seeing the former as an antidote to the latter does not really sound convincing. Rather it appears that if we want to place art into the center of human life, truth is not excluded but simply reasserted as the heart of art, as something claiming us, that is to say, as that which is the origin and the end of our wondering and questioning.

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