Nietzsche's Development Pedagogy

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1. Introduction

According to Friedrich Nietzsche, the 'will to truth' is the distinctively philosophical psychological motivation.[1] Thus, pursuing truth is the central concern for philosophers. While there has been much attention given in Anglophone Nietzsche scholarship to Nietzsche's understanding of truth and knowledge, such scholarship has largely considered the topic in terms of epistemology.[2] However, there are at least two issues with such an approach. First, there has recently been an important turn toward considering Nietzsche's psychological methodology.[3] This is important, as Nietzsche would himself suggest that considering truth epistemologically (investigating the possibility of truth and trying to define it accordingly) is not as useful as considering truth psychologically through questioning the value of truth in lived experience. Secondly, a purely epistemic approach to Nietzsche's understanding of truth fails to recognize the developmental terms in which Nietzsche tends to relay his own philosophy.

The developmental nature of Nietzsche's project is especially evident in his works published in 1886-1887. During this time, Nietzsche began writing new prefaces for most of his

[1] I understand 'will to truth' to refer to curiosity about what is true about the world. 'Philosophy', understood as 'love of wisdom', entails a desire for truth as its motivating drive. With the emergence of philosophy in the Greek world, the Pre-Socratics' cosmologies are driven by a will to truth, as they intend to understand natural phenomena in terms of rational principles rather than the mythic explanations given by the oldest extant Greek writing of Homer and Hesiod. Nietzsche was intimately familiar with the first Greek philosophers (whom he unconventionally called 'Pre-Platonic Philosophers' in order to emphasize the break in worldview announced by Plato), having been engaged in intensive study of the them from as early as 1869 until he his final lecture on the topic in Basel in 1876. Greg Whitlock, "Translator's Preface," in *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), xxvi-xxvii.

[2] The most authoritative work on Nietzsche's view of truth is Maudemarie Clark's *Nietzsche On Truth and Philosophy* (1990), to which Matthew Meyer's *Reading Nietzsche Through the Ancients* and Nadeem Hussain's "Nietzsche's Positivism" (2004) make important emendations.

[3] The notable example of this approach is Robert Pippin's *Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

earlier books, prompting him to reflect upon his earlier work.[4] The developmental mode of Nietzsche's thought is evident. For instance, he wrote: "My writings speak *only* of my overcomings: 'I' am in them together with everything that was inimical to me."[5] Elsewhere, he indicates the intended effect on readers, as his writings "contain snares and nets for unwary birds and in effect a persistent invitation to the overturning of habitual evaluations and valued habits."[6] That is to say, Nietzsche's writings invite a reader to reevaluate one's most deeply held convictions. For Nietzsche, such a reevaluation is liberative:

> The great liberation comes for those who are thus fettered suddenly, like the shock of an earthquake: the youthful soul is all at once convulsed, torn loose, torn away – it itself does not know what is happening. A drive and impulse rules and masters it like a command; a will and desire awakens to go off, anywhere, at any cost; a vehement dangerous curiosity for an undiscovered world flames and flickers in all its senses. 'Better to die than to go on living *here'* – thus responds the imperious voice and temptation: and this 'here', this 'at home' is everything it had hitherto loved![7]

Here, Nietzsche is, on the one hand, concerned with how he can communicate what he has gained in his own personal development to readers and, on the other hand, does not want to advocate for a simple transference of knowledge from the educator to the student, nor awakening

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[4] Nietzsche finished *Beyond Good and Evil* in March of 1886 and the book was published on August 4, 1886 (Ronald Hayman, *Nietzsche: A Critical Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 289, 296). New prefaces to the first and second parts of *Human, All Too Human* were completed in the spring and summer of 1886, respectively (*Ibid.*, 298). A new preface to *The Birth of Tragedy* was also finished that summer (*Ibid*.). Second editions of *Dawn* and *The Gay Science* were published with new introductions on June 24, 1887.

[5] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Human All Too Human* (*HH*), trans. R.J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), Part II "Preface": section 1, page 209. All subsequent references to Nietzsche's work will cite the book number or section title, followed by the section number and page number. All italics in quotations are Nietzsche's.

[6] *HH* I P: 1, 5.

[7] *HH* I P: 3, 7.

what a student already knows, as in the Platonic model of Anamnesis.[8] Nietzsche understands teaching in terms of reorienting his readers' perspective from a doctrinal transference of knowledge, which he believes characterizes Western philosophy since Plato, to what I call an experiential model of education.[9] Nietzsche's experiential account of education is characterized by a practical care for living in such a way that one consciously and truthfully relates to one's own moral and interpretive values. The lack of critical attention given to Nietzsche's philosophical pedagogy ought not to minimize the importance of the theme.[10] As is evident in the retrospective prefaces, Nietzsche was concerned with how his philosophy ought to be communicated to his readers; he held that the traditional account of philosophical education is not adequate to such a task. Instead, Nietzsche critiques dogmatic philosophy on psychological grounds in order to make it possible again to philosophize.

Nietzsche's pedagogical project rests upon the possibility of reorienting his reader. Philosophers traditionally tend to think of truth doctrinally or to underestimate the subjective character of knowledge. Nietzsche, instead, thinks that will to truth must take into account what he calls perspectivism. I understand Nietzsche's perspectivism to mean that the act of interpreting phenomena opens up new meanings for them and that inhabiting a perspective that considers these various meanings allows a philosopher to attain a fuller comprehension of the

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[8] Elsewhere, Nietzsche asserts his pedagogical concern more directly: "Shall my experience […] have been my personal experience alone? […] Today I would like to believe the reverse" (*HH* II P: 6, 213).

[9] Nietzsche gives incredible importance to the task of the philosopher, for instance when he suggests that people might come to understand that "the great *passion* of the knowledge-seeker who steadfastly lives, must live, in the thundercloud of the highest problems and the weightiest responsibilities (and thus in no way as an observer, outside, indifferent, secure, objective…)" (Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* (*GS*), Ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckhoff and Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), V: 351, 209). Thus, the proper education of a philosopher ought to be considered extremely important for Nietzsche.

[10] *Nietzsche, Culture and Education* (2009), edited by Thomas E. Hart is the only recent book-length study devoted to Nietzsche's philosophy of education. There has also has been some recent consideration of the educative concerns implicit within the structure of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (for instance, see Robert Pippin's introduction in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra (TSZ),* ed. Adrian Del Caro and Robert B. Pippin, trans. Adrian Del Caro (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006)).

phenomena in question. Failing to consider the perspectival nature of truth causes many philosophers to falsely universalize their own personal knowledge, as if it applied to everyone. This is the dominant dogmatic tendency of philosophy. Thus, a perspectival philosophical pedagogy must involve a reorientation of perspective.

In Nietzsche's final review of his own work, *Ecce Homo* (1888), he describes such a reorientation as an intentional part of the project of *Beyond Good and Evil*: "The eye that had been spoiled by an incredible needs to see into the *distance* […] is forced to focus on things that are closest to it, the age, our *surroundings.*"[11] Looking at our surroundings involves a critique of the present by reorienting the philosopher's understanding of modern moral presuppositions. A philosophical pedagogy would thus have to include perspectives that differ fundamentally from dogmatic philosophical doctrines. Nietzsche affects such a subjective reorientation with the question: "what is the value of truth for life?"[12] Nietzsche again addresses the reorientation involved in seeing one's surroundings in Book Five of *The Gay Science*:

> In order to see our European morality for once as it looks from a distance, and to measure it up against other past or future moralities, one has to proceed like a wanderer who wants to know how high the towers in a town are: he *leaves* the town. 'Thoughts about moral prejudices', if they are not to be prejudices about prejudices presuppose a position *outside* morality, some point beyond good and evil to which one has to rise, climb, or fly.[13]

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[11] Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo (EH)*, in *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), "Beyond Good and Evil": 2, 135.

[12] Notably, the question of the value of truth arises with *Dawn* (1881), already posed specifically in relation to education: "'What am I really *doing?* And why am *I* doing it?' – that is the question of truth which is not taught in our present system of education and is consequently not asked; we have no time for it" (Nietzsche, *Dawn*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), III: 196, 116-117).

[13] *GS* V: 380, 244.

Such a reorientation of perspective demands that those driven by a desire for truth liberate themselves from dogma as a basis for education.[14] It is important to know that Nietzsche considers morality here in two ways, one of which is familiar to English speakers, the other less so. Nietzsche uses '*Moral'* to refer to the normative Christian system of morality of modern Europe. However, he also uses *'Moral'* to refer to the hierarchy of rank order [*Rangordnung*] to which an individual subscribes due to historical contingency, the accident of local circumstances, or even their physiology.[15] Our moral rank order binds us to an idiosyncratic set of perspectival interpretations or valuations, which we take to be the basis of value.[16] The inescapability of morality shows that pedagogy must be predominantly psychological rather than epistemological because of the influence of one's own rank-order.

In this paper, I will first discuss the question of the value of truth, which Nietzsche uses as a diagnostic by which to bring into question the dogmatism prevalent in philosophy. Next, I will consider Nietzsche's reorienting critiques of the errors of doctrinal philosophy on largely psychological grounds, as a necessary condition for positing his developmental account of education. Finally, I will gesture toward the developmental account of philosophical education,

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[14] The audience whom Nietzsche addresses as 'we' is characterized in *BGE* as the "free, *very* free spirit" (Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil (BGE),* ed. Rolf-Peter Horstmann and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), P: 4). The 'free spirit' [*der freie Geist*] is described in terms of self-liberation: "The term 'free spirit' does not want to be understood in any other way: a spirit *that has become free*, that has taken hold of itself again" (*EH* "Human, All-Too-Human": 1, 116). In the preface to *HH*, Nietzsche writes that "when I needed to I once also *invented* for myself the 'free spirits' […]: 'free spirits' of this kind do not exist, did not exist – but as I have said, I had need of them at that time if I was to keep in good spirits while surrounded by ills" (*HH* I: 2, 6). Nietzsche goes on to use the term 'free spirit' throughout 1886 and 1887, suggesting that the term had remained eminently useful. I understand the 'free spirit' to be Nietzsche's ideal reader, the type most appropriate for his developmental educative project.

[15] I am very grateful to Prof. Heinrich Meier for pointing out the significance of *die Moral* in his class on *Beyond Good and Evil.* The influence of the individual's physiology is a disarmingly pervasive theme in *GS*, as is the influence of one's nature upon their morality. Nietzsche recognizes the complexity of rank order: "where life has developed at its smallest, narrowest, neediest, most incipient and yet cannot avoid taking *itself* as the goal and measure of things and for the sake of its own preservation secretly and meanly and ceaselessly crumbling away and calling into question the higher, greater, richer – you shall see with your own eyes the problem of *order of rank* [rank order], and how power and right and spaciousness of perspective grow into the heights together" (*HH* I: 6, 9).

[16] For the 'bindingness' of morality, see Raymond Geuss, "Nietzsche and Morality" in *European Journal of Philosophy* 5:1 (1997): 3.

which Nietzsche is able to present after having diversified his account from that of traditional philosophy. Before introducing Nietzsche's diagnostic question of the value of truth, I will first introduce the erotic conception of truth, upon which much of the rest of Nietzsche's understanding of truthfulness rests.

2. Diagnostic: The Value of Truth for Life

2.1. Erotics of Truth

Nietzsche's reclamation of philosophy from dogmatism begins with an alternative criterion to the divinized, universal conception of truth. Nietzsche's alternative criterion is the desacralized and erotic conception of truth, which he introduces at the very outset of *Beyond Good and Evil*:

> Suppose that truth is a woman – and why not? Aren't there reasons for suspecting that all philosophers, to the extent that they have been dogmatists, have not really understood women? That the grotesque seriousness of their approach towards the truth and the clumsy advances they have made so far are unsuitable ways of pressing their suit with a woman? What is certain is that she has spurned them – leaving dogmatism of all types standing sad and discouraged. *If* it is even left standing![17]

Here, Nietzsche introduces the image in a subjunctive tone ("*Vorausgesetzt, dass die Wahrheit ein Weib ist*"), suggesting the criterion of truth-as-woman hypothetically rather than argumentatively.[18] Such a presentation of the image is consistent with understanding it as a

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[17] *BGE* P: 3. The image of truth-as-woman is erotic in the sense given to eros in Plato's *Symposium* (Plato and Socrates are the only two philosophers mentioned by name in the preface to *BGE,* so consonance with Platonic eros is likely conscious on Nietzsche's part). According to Socrates, the erotic nature of love rests upon the idea of desire, of lack: "'So such a man or anyone else who has a desire desires what is not at hand and not present, what he does not have, and what he is not, and that of which he is in need; for such are the objects of desire and love'" (Plato, *Symposium,* in *Plato: Complete Works*, ed. John M. Cooper, trans. Alexander Nehamas and Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1997), 200e).

[18] It may be helpful to note that Nietzsche introduces 'the eternal return of the same' with the same tone in Book Four of *GS* ("What if some day or night a demon were to steal into your loneliest loneliness and say to you…" (*GS*

criterion, a hypothesis which is instrumentally helpful to the degree to which it can undermine the dogmatic enthronement of truth. The two most important elements of the truth-as-woman image are: first, that truth is desacralized, which is to say, presented as a woman rather than a goddess; and second, that truth is discussed in terms of desire and seduction, which is to say, erotically. In his influential account of Nietzsche's psychology, Robert Pippin argues that the image shows that philosophers fundamentally misunderstand their own relationship with truth.[19] Pippin suggests that the image points toward Nietzsche's account of being committed to a perspective on the basis of an erotic impulse in the ancient sense of a compulsive lack in the direction of truth. Dogmatic philosophers do not desire truthfulness in an erotic sense, as a striving toward something which they lack; instead they mistakenly assume they already have understood the truth and therefore have no desire for it. However, the erotic quality of truth is essential to understanding how the philosopher, as characterized by a desire for truth, relates to truthfulness. Thus, the dogmatic philosopher is prejudiced toward venerating the truth while their ignorance of the erotics of truth suggest that in fact dogmatists are driven by of a variety of desires but not by truth. Indeed, "love of truth" is, for Nietzsche, the most important

IV: 341, 194)). Elsewhere, Nietzsche refers to the idea of eternal return in terms of superlative importance when he calls the basic idea of *TSZ* "*the thought of eternal return*, the highest possible formula of affirmation" (*EH* "Thus Spoke Zarathustra": 1, 123). This goes to show that the subjunctive presentation of the truth-as-woman image ought to by no means undermine its importance for Nietzsche, since he first presented what he took to be his most profound and life-affirming thought, eternal return, in much the same way.

[19] "The central point of the image is that philosophers go about satisfying this desire [for erotic striving toward, here the will to truth] inexpertly and clumsily, with amateurish expectations" (Robert Pippin, *Nietzsche, Psychology, and First Philosophy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 14). Pippin further suggests that the erotic draw of truth is important not only for the image of truth as a woman, but also in the beginnings of *TSZ* and *GM* – I will discuss the latter later in this paper (*Ibid*., 12-13).

characteristic of the philosopher.[20] The dogmatist's prejudice is not really a will to truth at all but, rather, a misunderstanding of truth.[21]

2.2. The Value of Truth for Life

The erotic presentation of truth in the truth-as-woman image allows Nietzsche to introduce the diagnostic question, which he hopes will clear philosophy of dogmatism: what is the value of truth for life? According to Nietzsche, such a question has "never been raised until now."[22] By raising the question of the value of truth, Nietzsche is able to critique the underlying psychological drives behind dogmatist's purported love of truth. In the first aphorism of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche poses the question of the value of truth. He writes, "The will to truth that still seduces us into taking so many risks, this famous truthfulness that all philosophers so far have talked about with veneration: what questions this will to truth has already laid before us!"[23] Philosophers have venerated truthfulness as their primary virtue, a virtue which has developed to the point for thinkers that truth is absolute, universal, and even opposed to the corporeal world. Nietzsche declines to ask the traditional philosophical question 'what is truth.' Rather he maintains an instrumental role for truth: is truthfulness a useful concept for life on earth? Such a way of phrasing the question is 'grounding' in the sense that Nietzsche emphasizes the nontranscendent effects of truth in one's life, particularly if one is driven by the philosophical will to truth. The diagnostic question of the value of truth thus emphasizes immanence rather

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[20] For example, in Book Five of *GS*, Nietzsche shows that interests of the philosopher and free spirit intersect with the "daring of the lover of knowledge" (*GS* V: 343, 199).
[21] Jessica Berry argues that Nietzsche offers critiques of dogmatism from the perspective of Pyrrhonian skepticism, specifically regarding dogmatists' lack of honesty and intellectual conscience (Berry, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 105).
[22] *BGE* I: 1, 5. This sentiment may well be accurate. If truth is understood doctrinally, as is, for example, the wont of Platonism or Descartes' intensification and rational rebuke of skepticism, the question of what value truth has never need arise.
[23] *Ibid.*

than transcendence.[24] Nietzsche says that the single most important question that the will to truth has laid before us is, "*What* in us really wills the truth?" because it opens up the perspective from which we can question what causes the philosopher's veneration for truth.

Questioning the philosopher's cause for venerating truth leads Nietzsche to question what value truth has for life.[25] He accepts that the philosopher wills truth, but asks: "*why not untruth instead?* And uncertainty? Even ignorance?"[26] The question of the value of truth is even more central for Nietzsche than the cause of the will to truth. Further, Nietzsche's rhetoric places the questioner in a stance reminiscent of the erotic quality of truth as a desire for something that is inexplicable: "The problem of the value of truth came before us, — or was it we who came before the problem?"[27] The desire to question comes about thus as a "need of spirit."[28] By identifying the diagnostic question of the value of truth, Nietzsche can begin to critique the fundamental errors, which he argues undermine the dogmatists' attempts at philosophy. These errors must ultimately be cleared away in order to make it possible for one to philosophize.

[24] I borrow this sense of 'immanence' from Adrian Del Caro, who uses it to refer to the view that all value is determined by humans rather than any transcendental power and resides in the natural world: "Immanence is a state or mood according to which humans try to make the best and most of conditions on earth, not fatalistically but in a spirit of affirmation, with the goal of living groundedly and fully in the here and now" (Del Caro, Adrian, *Grounding the Nietzsche Rhetoric of Earth* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004), 63).
[25] *BGE* I: 1, 5.
[26] *BGE* I: 1, 5.
[27] *Ibid*.
[28] *BGE* P: 4.