

Nietzsche's Developmental Pedagogy (Part 2)

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2. Plato's Fundamental Error: Philosophical Dogmatism

In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche is concerned with how philosophy as he understands it, as independent self-willed love of knowledge, is a barrier to philosophers having an understanding of truth. Nietzsche suggests that we come to understand the grand systems of dogmatic philosophers as “some piece of folk superstition from time immemorial [...] some word-play perhaps, a seduction of grammar or an over-eager generalization from facts that are really very local, very personal, very human-all-too-human.”¹ Nietzsche suggests that in fact such a turn away from the unconscious prejudices of the dogmatists and toward a genuine will to truth has become possible. Subverting metaphysical ‘folk superstitions’ involves, however, becoming attuned to our prejudices in modernity, as we have inherited the errors of earlier thought. Thus, as Nietzsche suggests in *Ecce Homo*, bringing our attention to our surroundings means embodying a perspective which allows us to see such errors. The dogmatic philosopher understands truth in terms of an absolute doctrine, such as the Platonic doctrine of forms, which the dogmatic philosopher tends to present as a basic fact of nature—the way things are naturally and universally. In opposition to such a doctrinal understanding, Nietzsche argues that the truth of nature is that it is inherently meaningless: all moral valuation and rank order is historically contingent and comes from human interpretation. Understanding one’s psychological affinities for certain elements of moral rank order proves to be the way in which the philosopher, according to Nietzsche, can approach truth as an imminently human, all too human phenomena.

2.1. Plato's Invention of Pure Spirit and the Good in Itself

¹ BGE P: 3.

The ‘fundamental error’ which Nietzsche attacks in *Beyond Good and Evil* stems from Plato’s metaphysics. Nietzsche claims that “talking about spirit and the Good like Plato did meant standing truth on its head and disowning even *perspectivism*, which is the fundamental condition of all life.”² Nietzsche’s antagonism for the Socratic influence on Plato here centers around the historical development of Christianity, which Plato’s metaphysics allowed and is what Nietzsche sees as an ascetic appeal to reject the body – “since Christianity is Platonism for the ‘people.’”³ It is well-established in Nietzschean scholarship that Nietzsche believes Platonic metaphysics allowed the historically necessary condition for the development of Christian metaphysics.⁴ Nietzsche does not seem to be opposed to Plato himself but rather to Plato’s metaphysics and the heritage of Christian Platonism for which he made way. Similarly, Nietzsche sometimes has surprisingly positive things to say about Socrates, particularly in regard to Socrates’ ability to see his surroundings in precisely the way in which Nietzsche claims the dogmatic philosophers are incapable. That is to say, Nietzsche has a very particular complaint against Platonism and Socratism: namely, their dogmatism, which fundamentally misunderstands the truth by positing its absolute and impersonal validity. Nietzsche suggests that philosophies which emphasize metaphysical concepts in place of the natural world might fundamentally misunderstand the body: “philosophy has been no more than an interpretation of the body and a *misunderstanding of the body*.”⁵ Nietzsche hopes to undercut such a dogmatic understanding of philosophy by

² *BGE* P: 4.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ In particular, the Platonic errors made possible the otherworldly rejection of corporeality in Christian metaphysics. For example, Daniel Ahern argues that Nietzsche found “the insidious pessimism of Socratism, which, in asserting the sovereignty of our rational self, is venerating the fear of the body and therewith rejects all intimacy with the earth” (Daniel Ahern, *The Smile of Tragedy* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 81-82). Christa Acampora shows the pervasive consequences of the Socratic rejection of the body: “The Socratic legacy of dissociating *semblance* and intelligibility, formerly united in the Apollinian, gave ‘Schein’ [semblance] a bad name to such an extent that semblance came to be regarded not only as epistemically deficient [...] but also as morally defective (corrupting)” (Christa Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 89).

⁵ *GS* P: 2, 5.

asking a grounding question which can reorient philosophy in a life-affirming rather than life-denying perspective. Such a reorientation changes the question of what truth is from the dogmatic formula (what is the correct doctrine concerning 'x') to something more contingent (what is the value of 'x' for human life? Or, using the definition of truth to which Nietzsche comes in 1886, to what degree is the philosopher able to live truthfully?).

2.2. *Psychological Drives of the Dogmatic Philosopher*

One of the primary thrusts of Nietzsche's psychological critique of dogmatic philosophers is to show how the philosopher's purported love of truth veils more fundamental drives such as falsification or desire for power. For instance, Nietzsche argues that the universalizing tendency of the dogmatic philosopher, his seeming need for objective doctrine, can be explained in part by the utility of mistaking familiarity for knowledge. The dogmatic philosopher is as entrenched as he is within a false understanding of truth and knowledge because he follows basic doctrinal mistakes like the incorporeality of the soul and the Good in itself until such beliefs have become understood as a fundamental necessity simply due to his familiarity with them.

In Book Five of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche suggests that, commonly, knowledge as such merely seeks familiarity: "the will to uncover among everything strange, unusual, and doubtful something which no longer unsettles us."⁶ He connects this understanding of knowledge particularly to the philosopher, writing that "even the most cautious among them assume that the familiar can at least be *more easily known* than the strange."⁷ Folk superstitions, to reuse Nietzsche's earlier phrase, tend to reuse familiar concepts simply because familiarity is more comfortable than unfamiliarity. The philosopher who understands knowledge in such a way erroneously rejoices in the sense of security it affords:

⁶ *GS* V: 355, 214.

⁷ *GS* V: 355, 215.

Even the most cautious among them assume that the familiar can at least be *more easily known* than the strange; that for example sound method demands that we start from the ‘inner world’, from the ‘facts of consciousness’, because this world is *more familiar to us*. Error of errors! The familiar is what we are used to, and what we are used to is the most difficult to ‘know’ – that is, to view as a problem, to see as strange, as distant, as ‘outside us’... The great certainty of the natural sciences in comparison with psychology and the critique of the elements of consciousness [...] rests precisely on the fact that they take the *strange* as their object, while it is nearly contradictory and absurd even to *want* to take the not-strange as one’s object...⁸

Thus, embodying a perspective making what is normally thought to be familiar appear unfamiliar is a deceptively difficult task because it involves bringing an unconscious prejudice to one’s attention. The perspective which would allow for us to recognize our errors puts great demands upon the individual’s ability to withstand uncertainty. Such uncertainty has perhaps unexpected depth, reaching to fundamental concepts of autonomy, logic, and language: “Even behind all logic and its autocratic posturings stand valuations or, stated more clearly, physiological requirements for the preservation of a particular type of life.”⁹ The “particular type of life” which Nietzsche refers to here is simply the ways in which we have become accustomed to understanding the world in modernity. “For example,” Nietzsche continues, “that the determinate is worth more than the indeterminate, appearance worth less than the ‘truth’: despite all their regulative importance for *us*, these sorts of appraisals could still be just foreground appraisals, a

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *BGE* I: 3, 7. When Nietzsche asks the value of truth for life, I take him to ask what value living truthfully has if one is to affirm life. Is falsity more conducive to living well than truthfulness? Can we be truthful with ourselves without coming to a life-abnegating perspective, as many philosophers have done?

particular type of *niaiserie* [silliness. foolishness].”¹⁰ The silliness of the philosopher’s common appraisals show “childishness” because it shows the extent to which the philosopher fails to question the value of truthfulness of that which is most familiar to him. As a result, the philosopher incorrectly assumes that knowledge is universal and impersonal, which profoundly misunderstands that knowledge is a tool which is put to the always-already-determined purposes of morality, such as that ‘truth’ is worth more than appearance.

Nietzsche claims that by paying close attention to the arguments of philosophers he has noticed that the majority of conscious thought, including philosophical examples, is guided by instinctual drives and thus “most of a philosopher’s conscious thought is secretly directed and forced into determinate channels by the instincts.”¹¹ Many of the instincts the philosopher channels are geared toward falsifying the world rather than discovering truth. For instance, Nietzsche claims we project *errors* upon the natural world simply in order to live: “We have arranged for ourselves a world in which we are able to live – by positing bodies, lines, planes, causes and effects, motion and rest, form and content; without these articles of faith no one could endure living!”¹² Indeed, we pass these errors down culturally through time until they “finally almost became part of the basic endowment of the species.”¹³ The world is inherently value-less, yet human beings demand valuations in order to live.¹⁴ Thus, human beings have established concepts based on faith in order to live.¹⁵ Individuals have long created reasons for why life is worth living from this perspective, and their teaching has changed human nature such that “*it has acquired one additional need*, the need for the repeated appearance of such teachers and such

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² *GS III*: 121, 117.

¹³ *GS III*: 110, 110.

¹⁴ *GS IV*: 301, 171.

¹⁵ *GS III*: 121, 117.

teachings of a ‘purpose’.”¹⁶ This development in human nature has made the human being “a fantastic animal that [...] *must* from time to time believe he knows *why* he exists.”¹⁷ Nietzsche suggests that human nature can be altered over time, through heredity and culture, to include such errors. Thus, we superimpose errors upon the world as instruments which allow us to live. However, since these instrumental errors pass down over time and indeed originate in “time immemorial,” we come to forget that they are errors. The naïve beliefs of the dogmatists stem from such long-lived errors. Alexander Nehamas argues that while most commentators reduce Nietzsche’s argument concerning such falsification to a rough thesis (essentially the view that all human beliefs are false), Nietzsche in fact refers entirely to interpretative activities as falsification: “the activities on which Nietzsche focuses are, almost exclusively, thinking, feeling, willing, remembering, and acting—activities to which he returns again and again.”¹⁸ In the same sense that the individual experience is changed by becoming conscious of phenomena, the resulting falsification is thus perspectival in that it belongs to the particular interpretation possible from a single point of view.¹⁹ Thus, it is helpful to recognize that Nietzsche suggests that we do not have to mildly accept such errors as part of human nature, as the dogmatists do without noticing. While error is fundamental to the evaluative activities necessary for life, the dogmatists’ errors can be critiqued according to the criterion of their value for life. The

¹⁶ *GS* I: 1, 29.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Alexander Nehamas, "Nietzsche on Truth and the Value of Falsehood," *Journal Of Nietzsche Studies* 48, no. 3 (2017): 335. Nietzsche expresses a very similar view of our lack of ability to accurately make sense of our sensations in *Twilight of the Idols* (1888): “The senses do not lie the way the Eleatics thought they did, or the way Heraclitus thought they did, - they do not lie at all. What we *do* with the testimony of the senses, that is where the lies begin.” Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols (TI)*, ed. Aaron Ridley and Judith Norman, trans. Judith Norman (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), IV: 2, 167.

¹⁹ Nadeem J. Z. Hussain gives an interpretation of Nietzsche’s falsification in *BGE* 15 which supports my claim here. He presents a reading informed by the physicist Ernst Mach in which “an interpretation of the world, and thus a perspective on the world, is a theory of the world that sets up names for particular clusters of sensory elements and the relations they stand in.” Nadeem J. Z. Hussain, “Nietzsche’s Positivism,” *European Journal of Philosophy* 12:3 (2004), 349-350.

universalizing view of the dogmatist contradicts such an approach and therefore misunderstands the erotic will for truth.

Dogmatic philosophers attempt to justify their preferences by generalizing their own perspective as if it applied universally. Nehamas identifies Plato's error when he writes that "the thought that what is good for one, 'good for Plato,' is good for all, good in itself."²⁰ However, the implication of such an understanding of truth is that the dogmatist misunderstands the real value of truth: how it can contribute to living. Nietzsche claims that we ought not to consider a judgment from the criteria of its falsity; instead, "the question is how far the judgment promotes and preserves life, how well it preserves, and perhaps even cultivates, the type."²¹ Nietzsche goes on to claim that oftentimes false judgments are the most necessary for life and without "constant falsification of the world [...] people could not live."²² What follows is even more perplexing: "To acknowledge untruth as a condition of life: this clearly means resisting the usual value feelings in a dangerous manner; and a philosophy that risks such a thing would by that gesture alone place itself beyond good and evil."²³ One is able to begin to survey one's surroundings, even one's own morality, only if such a dangerously unfamiliar perspective is achieved. The value of truth has been so thoroughly forgotten and ignored that philosophers, of all people, who profess to have a will to truth, never really consider why they desire the truth or even whether it would be worth desiring. The perspective from which one can ask such question is one from which the questioner can stand an answer involving epistemic uncertainty, a resounding: "Perhaps!"²⁴ Dogmatists refuse such an honest answer and thus such philosophers "all act as if

²⁰ Nehamas, 340.

²¹ *BGE I*: 4, 7.

²² *BGE I*: 4, 7.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *BGE I*: 2, 6. Pippin argues that such epistemic uncertainty is central for Nietzsche's affection for the French moralists (Montaigne, Pascal, and La Rochefoucauld). The moralists' ability to embody uncertainty means that they

they had discovered and arrived at their genuine convictions through the self-development of a cold, pure, divinely insouciant dialectic.”²⁵ The respectability inspired by the seemingly impersonal and universally true allows philosophers to believe that they are centrally concerned with the will to truth when in fact their intentions betray hidden motives. For instance, Nietzsche claims that he does not believe “that a ‘drive to knowledge’ is the father of philosophy, but rather that another drive, here as elsewhere, used knowledge (and mis-knowledge!) merely as a tool.”²⁶ However, the ruling drive in the case of these philosophers was not truth but a desire for power: “every drive craves mastery, and *this* leads it to try philosophizing.”²⁷ A scholar, Nietzsche writes, might really be compelled by “something like a drive for knowledge,” but the philosophers, who claim that they are fundamentally concerned with courting truth, may be driven, but not by a desire for truth because they misunderstand it.²⁸

2.2.1. *The Dogmatist’s Faith*

The dogmatic philosopher is determined by his faith in a single point of view. “Faith,” Nietzsche argues, “is always most desired and most urgently needed where will is lacking.”²⁹ Fanaticism, or excessive faith, according to Nietzsche is the complete denial of perspectivism in favor of faith in a single point of view. Such fanaticism is “a type of hypnosis of the entire sensual-intellectual system to the benefit of the excessive nourishment (hypertrophy) of a single point of view and feeling which is now dominant – the Christian calls it his *faith*.”³⁰ Thus, the opposite to the dogmatic perspective, characterized by faith in a single point of view, would be an individual

“are presented without, and with no hidden reliance on, a ‘deeper’ philosophical theory of human nature or of reason or of anything else, and it is clearly an assumption in all three (and by Nietzsche) that this is not a limitation but unavoidable if one is to write ‘honestly,’ and so is a virtue” (Pippin (2010), 10).

²⁵ *BGE I*: 5, 8.

²⁶ *BGE I*: 6, 8-9.

²⁷ *BGE I*: 6, 9.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *GS V*: 347, 205-206.

³⁰ *GS V*: 347, 206.

who could view phenomena from many perspectives by virtue of their own strength-of-will: “one could conceive of a delight and power of self-determination, a *freedom* of the will, in which the spirit takes leave of all faith and every wish for certainty, practiced as it is in maintaining itself on light ropes and possibilities and dancing even beside abysses. Such a spirit would be the *free spirit* par excellence.”³¹ The free spirit and the dogmatic philosopher are opposing types, particularly in their understanding of knowledge. This helps to shed light on the dogmatist’s inability to court truth introduced in the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*. The dogmatic philosopher’s inability to embody alternative perspectives apart from his accustomed doctrine explains his inability to understand the erotic quality of truth: “there are good reasons for hoping that all dogmatizing in philosophy was just noble (though childish) ambling and preambing, however solemn, settled and decisive it might have seemed.”³² Nietzsche argues that the dogmatic philosopher is driven by psychological drives beside the will to truth, which they fail to realize. He notes that the philosopher’s tendency to systematize stems from the inability to understand truth in relation to life. He writes, “I have gradually come to realize what every great philosophy so far has been: a confession of faith on the part of its author, and a type of involuntary and unselfconscious memoir; in short, that the moral (or immoral) intentions in every philosophy constitute the true living seed from which the whole plant has always grown.”³³ A faith develops in accordance with how much a person needs it: “an article of faith could be refuted to [a man] a thousand times; as long as he needed it, he would consider it ‘true’ again and again.”³⁴ The dogmatist’s hypertrophic embodiment of one particular perspective on faith leads him to misidentify his will for power as will for truth.

³¹ *GS* V: 347, 206.

³² *BGE* P: 3.

³³ *BGE* I: 6, 8.

³⁴ *GS* V: 347, 205.

2.2.2. *The Dogmatist's Will to Power*

The philosopher's hidden will to power becomes apparent due to primarily psychological observation. For instance, Nietzsche criticizes the Stoic's desire to live "according to nature."³⁵ Nietzsche asks how the Stoic could come to live according to indifference, which is a fundamental quality of nature. Rather than expressing a desire to live according to nature, the Stoic instead projects his or her own valuation onto the inherently disorganized character of nature: "Your pride wants to dictate and annex your morals and ideals onto nature – yes, nature itself."³⁶ Nietzsche continues, "for all your love of truth, you have forced yourselves so long, so persistently, and with such hypnotic rigidity to have a *false*, namely Stoic, view of nature, that you can no longer see it any other way."³⁷ This is a key example of the adherents of a dogmatic philosophy being unable to see their own surroundings (in this case, the natural world) and instead trying to project valuations which Stoics already presuppose are true onto nature. Nietzsche then generalizes from this example, claiming that philosophy does the very same thing today, wherever it believes in itself: "It always creates the world in its own image, and it cannot do otherwise; philosophy is this tyrannical drive itself, the most spiritual will to power, to the 'creation of the world,' to the *causa prima* [first cause]."³⁸ This is Nietzsche's first reference to 'the will to power' in *Beyond Good and Evil*, and he uses the term here to refer to the instrumentality of philosophy which misunderstands its own instrumental use and instead spiritualizes this need such that even the philosopher believes he is motivated by a desire for truth. That is to say, Nietzsche here identifies the self-deception of the philosopher: it stems from

³⁵ *BGE* I: 9, 10.

³⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁷ *BGE* I: 9, 10.

³⁸ *BGE* I: 9, 11.

the instrumentality of the philosopher as value-creator, used as a means of obtaining power, but hidden from the philosopher and therefore unrecognized.

Since the philosopher is driven not by a will to truth but by unconscious psychological desires, moments of unconscious autobiography unavoidably arise at which point the “philosopher’s ‘conviction’ steps onto the stage.”³⁹ The drive for truth cannot be impersonal because “there is absolutely nothing impersonal about the philosopher; and in particular his morals bear decided and decisive witness to *who he is* – which means, in what order of rank the innermost drives of his nature stand with respect to each other.”⁴⁰ Nietzsche’s point at the end of this passage gets to his absolutely essential understanding of an individual’s morals. It is impossible for any philosophy to avoid faith in some morality: “Strictly speaking, there is no ‘presuppositionless’ knowledge, the thought of such a thing is unthinkable, paralogical: a philosophy, a ‘faith’ always has to be there first, for knowledge to win from it a direction, a meaning, a limit, a method, a *right* to exist.”⁴¹ Thus, the task of the proper philosopher resides in accurately understanding the moral rank order that orders the hierarchical values that the philosopher holds for him or herself.

This leads me to ask how Nietzsche hopes the philosopher ought to understand knowledge within such a project. Such a project will prove to be experiential and leads to Nietzsche’s pedagogical insight concerning how philosophy, cleared of the errors of metaphysics and dogmatic, may come to be practiced in terms of a pursuit of living truthfully.

3. Living Truthfully: Toward a Developmental Pedagogy in Philosophy

³⁹ *BGE* I: 8, 10. Here, Nietzsche references the appearance of the philosopher’s conviction to the “ancient Mystery” of the yea-saying ass, a reference to “The Ass Festival” in *Z* IV, when, despite himself, Zarathustra cries “Hee-yaw” (in German, the sound a donkey makes sounds like ‘yea’ and ‘amen’). Nietzsche, *TSZ*, IV: 18, 255. My thanks to Prof. Heinrich Meier for the ‘yea-saying’ interpretation of the donkey.

⁴⁰ Nietzsche, *BGE* I: 6, 9. Like the dogmatist, the predominant modern type, the scientific scholar, who is seemingly objective is also intricately tied to his or her life circumstances (see *GS* V: 348, 206–207).

⁴¹ *GM* III: 24, 112.

3.1. *Experience [Erlebnis]: Developmental Pedagogy*

Nietzsche's critique of the dogmatic philosopher's understanding of truth allows him to posit an experiential rather than doctrinal understanding of truthfulness and knowledge. A philosopher's task, characterized by such an experiential understanding, proves to be concerned with self-knowledge to the extent that the possibility of the individual's own truthful understanding of how his or her values comes to the fore and is not concerned with self-knowledge in any Hegelian subject-object terms. When Nietzsche introduces self-knowledge in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, he thus begins by emphasizing desire, claiming that "we are unknown to ourselves, we knowers: and with good reason. We have never looked for ourselves, - so how are we ever supposed to *find* ourselves?"⁴² Nietzsche refers to philosophers in the first-person plural, 'we knowers,' concerned, like Nietzsche, with the will to truth. Philosophers have considered in great detail how to obtain knowledge [*Erkenntniss*], but we have never really considered our own *experience [Erlebnis]*. Nietzsche's use of 'we' here, as in *Beyond Good and Evil*, self-selectively calls those whom identify with the will to truth, the erotic desire for knowing, to consider themselves included in 'we knowers.'⁴³ The philosophical perspective of the 'knower' challenges the impersonal, objective, universalizing, and non-perspectival understanding of knowledge which would hope to take home fragments of knowledge, like the honey-bees Nietzsche mentions in the preface.⁴⁴ The dogmatic philosophers approach knowledge like bees, trying to take away pieces of knowledge as if they could live an abstract life. Instead, Nietzsche suggests, the free spirit or true philosopher would be one who is able to value truth to the degree that it is one's own truth; to the degree that it has had to become valuable through experience. The

⁴² *GM P*: 1, 3.

⁴³ In the next paragraph, Nietzsche explicitly refers to "us philosophers." Nietzsche, *GM P*: 2, 4.

⁴⁴ *GM P*: 2, 4

possibility of Nietzsche's communicating such an educative project to prospective free spirits in Nietzsche readers depends upon seduction of the reader to realize his or her desire for such truthfulness, to withstand his or her own morality.

The prejudices of the dogmatic philosophers fail to account for philosophical knowledge to the degree that they fail to interpret their own task of rank-ordering, which is intimately tied to a person's subjectivity.⁴⁵ Nietzsche writes in *On the Genealogy of Morality* that he fears that "as far as the rest of life is concerned, the so-called 'experiences'," we will fail to remember these in favor of abstract knowledge.⁴⁶ Our own interpretations do not arise arbitrarily or outside of the influence of others: "our thoughts, values, every 'yes', 'no', 'if' and 'but' grow from us with the same inevitability as fruits borne on the tree – all related and referring to one another and a testimonial to one will, one health, one earth, one sun."⁴⁷ Our knowledge develops experientially along with us, like an organism, or more specifically to use a favorite analogy of Nietzsche's, like a tree. It is of central importance to Nietzsche himself that his thoughts develop in this manner:

The fact *that* I still stick to them today, and that they themselves in the meantime have stuck together increasingly firmly, even growing into one another and growing into one, makes me all the more blithely confident that from the first, they did not arise in me individually, randomly or sporadically but as stemming from a single root, from a *fundamental will* to knowledge deep inside me which

⁴⁵ In *BGE*, Nietzsche refers to the future philosopher's "passion for knowledge," which will lead them to experiments which their contemporaries will think improper (*BGE* VI: 210, 104).

⁴⁶ *GS* V: 351, 209.

⁴⁷ *GM*, P: 2, 4.

took control, speaking more and more clearly and making ever clearer demands.
And this is the only thing proper for a philosopher.⁴⁸

This vision of the organic growth of Nietzsche's own philosophy offers the best example of the "wakefulness" which he hopes will replace dogmatism. Nietzsche presents such an alternative to dogmatism in the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*: "But now that [Plato's metaphysical error] has been overcome, and Europe breathes a sigh of relief after this nightmare, and at least can enjoy a healthier – well – sleep, *we, whose task is wakefulness itself*, are the heirs to all the force cultivated through the struggle against this error."⁴⁹ Such organic growth may make one "incomprehensible" – even to himself or herself.⁵⁰ However, such growth is natural to living beings: "Like trees we grow – it's hard to understand, like all life! – not in one place, but everywhere; not in one direction, but upwards and outwards and inwards and downwards equally; our energy drives trunk, branches, and roots all at once; we are no longer free to do anything individual, to *be* anything individual... This is our lot, as I have said: we grow in *height*."⁵¹ The benefit of the reorientation toward which Nietzsche himself has tended, is that he

⁴⁸ *Ibid.* The underlying motivation behind uncovering the truth rather than falsehood is the concept of authenticity, which Thomas E. Hart claims is essential to Nietzsche's educational project. Understood roughly as a rejection of dogmatic complacency in favor of persistent questioning, Hart writes that "authenticity cannot lead to would-be canonical answers to the questions of life and the abatement of struggle and suffering. Instead it allows us to recognize these as the fundamental characteristic of life, through which alone any degree of happiness and freedom are to be achieved" (Thomas E. Hart, "A Philosophy for Education," in *Nietzsche, Culture and Education*, ed. Thomas E. Hart (Farnham: Ashgate, 2009), 123). When knowledge is understood in such a way that the process of knowing is emphasized, it is "an essential component of the pursuit of authenticity because it seeks to facilitate the creation of values and meaning; it encourages creation of truths by which one's unique existence is made possible" (*Ibid.*, 127).

⁴⁹ *BGE* P: 4.

⁵⁰ *GS* V: 371, 236.

⁵¹ *Ibid.* The botanical association between self-liberation and education, discussed in this paper primarily in relation to Nietzsche's 1886-1887 works, appears to be present in Nietzsche from the third *Untimely Meditation* in 1874, where Nietzsche writes that "culture is liberation, the removal of all the weeds, rubble and vermin that want to attack the tender buds of the plant, an outstreaming of light and warmth, the gentle rustling of nocturnal rain" (Nietzsche, *Schopenhauer as Educator (SE)*, in *Untimely Meditations (UM)*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1, 130. Sean D. Kirkland connects Nietzsche's early interest in the Pre-Platonic Greeks with Nietzsche's desire for personally attunement in philosophy. (Sean D. Kirkland, "Nietzsche and Drawing Near to the Personalities of the Pre-Platonic Greeks, *Continental Philosophy Review* 44 (2011), 426).

provides his reader the ability to question their own, usually unconscious, hierarchy of values. We can now understand why Nietzsche claims in the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil* that we should be grateful to dogmatism: it has allowed us the conditions by which we can now reorient ourselves toward our values. The realization of a perspectival philosophical project is suggested in the section of *On the Genealogy of Morality* usually cited in reference to perspectivism. Here, Nietzsche addresses philosophers:

as knowers, let us not be ungrateful towards such resolute reversals of familiar perspectives and valuations with which the mind has raged against itself for far too long [...]: to see differently, and to *want* to see differently to that degree, is no small discipline and preparation of the intellect for its future ‘objectivity’ – the latter understood not as ‘contemplation without interest’ (which is, as such, a non-concept and an absurdity-, but as *having in our power* the ability to engage and disengage our ‘pros’ and ‘cons’: we can use the *difference* in perspectives and affective interpretations for knowledge.⁵²

Nietzsche’s explanation of ‘objectivity’ makes clear that he means the concept in terms of gaining mastery or having a powerful interpretation of something; an example of this would be the metaphysical interpretation of the soul by Plato. Such interpretations, in combination with new perspectives gained from such grounding questions as Nietzsche’s question of the value of truth, open up new interpretative horizons which can never be understood disinterestedly.

3.2. *Withstanding Truthfulness, the Desert of ‘We Free, Very Free Spirits’*

Unlike the dogmatist, the free spirit is recognizable by its ability to withstand truth.

Independence is a “prerogative of the strong.”⁵³ The “strong” in spirit are likely to be able to

⁵² *GM* III: 12, 87.

⁵³ *BGE*, II: 29, 30.

“withstand” more truth than those who are weaker in spirit.⁵⁴ Similarly, the stronger spirits choose “the good solitude, the free, high-spirited, light-hearted solitude” rather than the distrustful and resentful solitude of those “forced to become hermits” as outcasts.⁵⁵ The self-instigated form of independence begun by those who do not have to become so, which is to say, independence sought by those who self-select, is likened to a labyrinth. The spirit “enters a labyrinth, he multiplies by a thousand the dangers already inherent in the very act of living, not the least of which is the fact that no one with eyes will see how and where he gets lost and lonely and is torn limb from limb by some cave-Minotaur of conscience.”⁵⁶ The labyrinth metaphor is meant to depict the individual’s development of independence by cutting him or her off from the pity of others — the crowd can no longer understand the individual’s trial because it is of a different variety than they have experienced. The prerogative to “test” oneself appears repeatedly in Book Two of *Beyond Good and Evil* as something which the free spirit must put themselves through (particularly tests of their ability to achieve solitude).⁵⁷ Self-testing amounts to experimenting with how well the spirit is able to withstand erotic knowledge, that which involves consciously appropriative knowledge of the self, knowledge which must be personal in order to be considered truth, since it would “offend their pride, as well as their taste, if their truth were a truth for everyone.”⁵⁸ For one example, the “art of experiment,” which the free spirit practices in the face of adversities and which the metaphor of the labyrinth illustrates, “has had to develop under prolonged pressure and compulsion into something refined and daring.”⁵⁹ The

⁵⁴ *BGE* II: 39, 37.

⁵⁵ *BGE* II: 25, 26.

⁵⁶ *BGE* II: 29, 30.

⁵⁷ *BGE* II: 41, 39.

⁵⁸ *BGE* II: 40, 40. Nietzsche here refers specifically to future philosophers, whom Nietzsche says “will not *just* be free spirits, but rather something more, higher, greater, and fundamentally different,” but which nonetheless emerges from the free spirit as an augmentation, a “*very* free spirit” (*ibid.*).

⁵⁹ *BGE* II: 44, 41.

reason why the free spirit is distinguished by its ability to withstand truth has largely been forgotten in modernity. Desire to exhibit his experiences only came after convalescing from the pain of the experiences.

3.3. *Tension of Spirit: The Potential for a Philosophical Pedagogy*

I am now able to return to the preface of *Beyond Good and Evil* for a final time in order to consider why Nietzsche seems grateful to dogmatism, despite its terrible propagation of errors. The history of dogmatism is valuable for Nietzsche because it has created monumental tension of spirit: “with such a tension in our bow we can now shoot at the furthest goals.”⁶⁰ Europe had twice tried to relieve this tension and thereby remove the spirit’s experience of itself “as need.”⁶¹ The first attempt to do so was by trying to make Catholicism more accessible for the masses with the advent of Jesuitism. The second attempt was the institution of universal human rights with the democratic Enlightenment. But, Nietzsche writes, “we, who are neither Jesuits nor democrats, nor even German enough, we *good Europeans* and free, *very* free spirits – we still have it, the whole need of spirit and the whole tension of its bow! And perhaps the arrow too, the task, and – who knows? The *goal...*”⁶² Nietzsche’s ‘we’ certainly is rhetorical: he intends to entice the readers inclined toward a similar will to truth, to read themselves into the ‘we,’ much like in the preface to *On the Genealogy of Morality*. However, Nietzsche’s ‘we’ is pedagogical as well; Nietzsche invites readers to take themselves seriously (or jocularly, as the circumstances would have it) and see if they might be able to reorient themselves to “wakefulness.”

Nietzsche opposes dogmatic philosophy and the ‘error’ of Plato which made way for Christian metaphysics because of the danger it poses for legitimate life-affirming value creation.

⁶⁰ *BGE* P: 4.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

⁶² *Ibid.*

In Nietzsche's treatment of the ascetic ideal in the Third Essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*, he argues that such a life-denying tendency has always been characteristic of philosophers: "undeniably, as long as there are philosophers on earth and whenever there have been philosophers [...] there exists a genuine philosophers' irritation and rancor against sensuality [...]; similarly there exists a genuine partiality and warmth among philosophers with regard to the whole ascetic ideal."⁶³ A certain asceticism is necessary for the philosopher: "Both these features [irritation with sensuality and partiality for asceticism] belong [...] to the type."⁶⁴ Indeed, Nietzsche argues, the philosopher developed due to asceticism: "it was only on the *leading-rein* of this ideal that philosophy ever learnt to take its first toddler steps on earth."⁶⁵ The philosopher's partiality for asceticism is instinctual to the degree that asceticism is conducive to the philosopher's task *qua* philosopher:

On seeing an ascetic ideal, the philosopher smiles because he sees an optimum condition of the highest and boldest intellectuality, - he does *not* deny 'existence' by doing so, but rather affirms *his* existence and *only* his existence, and possibly does this to the point where he is not far from making the outrageous wish: *pereat mundus, fiat philosophia, fiat philosophus, fiam* [Let the world perish, but let philosophy exist, let the philosopher exist, let me exist]...⁶⁶

The ascetic ideal is a prominent feature of the philosopher because it is most conducive to philosophical thriving and, to the degree that it does so, becomes the philosopher's "*predominant* instinct."⁶⁷ The predominant drives which make the philosopher appropriate to the task of

⁶³ *GM* III: 7, 76.

⁶⁴ *GM* III: 7, 76.

⁶⁵ *GM* III: 9, 81.

⁶⁶ *GM* III: 7, 77.

⁶⁷ *GM* III: 8, 78. I understand 'predominant instinct' here in much the way that Nietzsche speaks of powerful drives in *GS*, where he argues that morality always includes an "evaluation and ranking of human drives and actions" (*GS* III: 116, 114). According to Nietzsche, drives are ranked in accord to how much they benefit the needs of the

learning truth that Nietzsche gives are all associated with the ascetic ideal.⁶⁸ The predominant instinct of the philosopher, the ascetic ideal, is necessary to the philosopher to the extent that it allows the development of independence:

The ascetic ideal points the way to so many bridges to *independence* that no philosopher can refrain from inwardly rejoicing and clapping hands on hearing the story of those who, one fine day, decided to say ‘no’ to any curtailment of their liberty, and go off into the *desert* even granted they were just strong asses and the complete opposite of a strong spirit.⁶⁹

The drives which Nietzsche argues make the ascetic ideal rule the philosopher lead to solitude (the ‘desert’); the philosopher is driven by a love for knowledge to the extent that he or she is able to realize this task of the philosophical type, in opposition to the contemporary opinions of the day.⁷⁰ The philosopher has always opposed the traditional valuations which his or her contemporaries hold *qua* philosopher.⁷¹ However, Nietzsche suggests with a question that such asceticism is not the only possible future for the philosopher: “Is there enough pride, daring, courage, self-confidence, will of spirit, will to take responsibility, *freedom of will*, for the ‘the philosopher’ on earth to be really – *possible?...*”⁷² Thus, Nietzsche opens the possibility for the philosopher to make the unprecedented historical step of denying asceticism and living an

community. Understood in this sense, Nietzsche’s statement in *GM* III that the ruling ascetic drive of the philosopher runs counter to “the primary demands of morality and conscience for the longest period of time” by valuing the philosopher’s own needs over that of the community (*GM* III: 9, 81).

⁶⁸ Nietzsche describes the ruling drives of the philosopher which favor asceticism: “If we draw up a list of the particular drives and virtues of the philosopher – his drive to doubt, his drive to deny, his drive to prevaricate (his ‘ephectic’ drive [a reference to Sextus Empiricus’ *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*]), his drive to analyse, his drive to research, investigate, dare, his drive to compare and counter-balance, his will to neutrality and objectivity, his will to every ‘*sine ira et studio*’ [without anger or partisanship]” (*GM* III: 9, 81).

⁶⁹ *GM* III: 7, 77. Nietzsche’s reference to ‘asses’ here recalls the ‘yes-saying’ of the donkey in *BGE* 8 and *TSZ* 4.

⁷⁰ *GM* III: 8, 79.

⁷¹ *GM* III: 10, 84.

⁷² *GM* III: 10, 84.

affirmative existence on earth. Such a philosophical project would clearly deny any metaphysical transcendence and thus would reject dogmatic philosophy, as argued above. The will required to extricate philosophy from asceticism appears on the horizon opened with a developmental rather than doctrinal response to the philosopher's contingent circumstances.⁷³

In modernity, much religious faith has been lost, but the philosopher's morality is nonetheless religious.⁷⁴ The modern faith, which spurns religiosity and favors scholarship, is nonetheless rooted in the same metaphysical error established by Plato: "'will to truth' does *not* mean 'I do not want to let myself be deceived' but – there is no alternative – 'I will not deceive, not even myself'; *and with that we stand on moral ground.*"⁷⁵ The moral ground upon which we stand is the necessity of valuation — which is inescapable. But, Nietzsche continues, the grounding question of the value of truth does allow us to orient ourselves authentically in relation to truth: "it is still a *metaphysical faith* upon which our faith in science rests – that even we knowers of today, we godless anti-metaphysicians, still take *our* fire, too, from the flame lit by the thousand-year old faith, the Christian faith which was also Plato's faith, that God is truth; that truth is divine."⁷⁶ For the philosopher attuned to the erotics of truth, the audience whom he addresses as "free, very free spirits," a conscious sort of moral relationship can still be undertaken, driven by a "*great love,*" an erotic attachment.⁷⁷ Such knowledge cannot be disinterested, "it makes the most telling difference whether a thinker has a personal relationship to his problems and finds in them his destiny, his distress, and his greatest happiness, or an

⁷³ I understand such contingent circumstances as not only the epoch in which the philosopher lives, but also the morality which they have come to value, the specific circumstances of their life (such as Nietzsche's constant infirmity), and even other physiological factors, such as diet or exercise, since all of these affect what a person values and how they experience such values.

⁷⁴ "As a sort of epistemological skepticism, modern philosophy is, covertly or overtly, *anti-Christian* (although, to state the point for more subtle ears, by no means anti-religious)" (*BGE* III: 54, 49).

⁷⁵ *GS* V: 344, 201.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *GS* V: 345, 202.

‘impersonal’ one, meaning he is only able to touch and grasp them with the antennae of cold, curious thought.”⁷⁸ Much like in the truth-as-woman section of the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche writes that “nothing will come” of a disinterested approach to knowledge.⁷⁹

Nietzsche claims that education must be experiential in order to be philosophical.⁸⁰

Nietzsche himself quotes the passage from aphorism 345 of *The Gay Science* in *On the Genealogy of Morality*, when he calls into question the supposed ‘free spirits’ of modernity who “believe they are all as liberated as possible from the ascetic ideal, these ‘free, very free spirits’: and yet, I will tell them what they themselves cannot see – because they are standing too close to themselves – this ideal is quite simply *their* ideal as well [...] These are very far from being *free* spirits: *because they still believe in truth.*”⁸¹ Philosophy and belief in truth still retains a kind of faith. Showing the relation to the question of the value of truth, Nietzsche returns to much of the imagery already discussed in Section 24 of *On the Genealogy of Morality*. The labyrinth metaphor reemerges in relation to experiential knowledge: “Has a European or a Christian free-thinker [*Freigeist*] ever strayed into this proposition and the labyrinth of its *consequences*? Does he know the Minotaur of this cave *from experience*?” Nietzsche again describes Plato’s error and truth-as-woman, “Whoever understands it the other way round and, for example, tries to place philosophy ‘on a strictly scientific foundation’, must first *stand on its head* not just philosophy but also truth itself: the worst offence against decency which can occur in relation to two such respectable ladies!”⁸² However, Section 24 of *On the Genealogy of Morality* does not leave the pursuit of the free spirit without any hope. Instead, questioning the meaning of the ascetic ideal

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ “The secret force and necessity of this task will rule among and in the individual facets of [the individual’s] destiny like an unconscious pregnancy – long before he has caught sight of this task itself or knows its name” (*HH I P: 7, 10*).

⁸¹ *GM III: 24, 111.*

⁸² *GM III: 24, 112.*

proves to be tied intimately with asking the question of the value of truth: “From the very moment that faith in the God of the ascetic ideal is denied, *there is a new problem as well*: that of the *value* of truth. – The will to truth needs a critique – let us define our own task with this -, the value of truth is tentatively to be *called into question...*”⁸³ The task, or goal, Nietzsche introduces in the preface of *Beyond Good and Evil*, opened by the two millennia history of Platonism and Christianity, comes into view not through a doctrinal presentation but instead, Nietzsche hopes, through asking the value of the will to truth: “what meaning does *our* being have, if it were not that that will to truth has become conscious of itself *as a problem* in us?”⁸⁴ And this problem, the “will to truth’s becoming-conscious-of-itself” might at last allow a reevaluation of morality.⁸⁵

Despite the ascetic tendencies which the will to truth has historically elicited from philosophers, Nietzsche suggests in *On the Genealogy of Morality* that the distinctive drive of the philosopher may lead to reevaluation, on the personal level, of his intended reader’s unconscious moral valuation and, on the political level, to the reevaluation of the Christian moral values according to which Europe had hitherto developed. Nietzsche’s critique of dogmatic philosophy on psychological grounds allows the necessary condition for the development of will to truth if Nietzsche’s readers take up the developmental pedagogical project which Nietzsche has set before them. Nietzsche is able to gesture toward such a developmental and perspectival pedagogy as an educative driven not by the volition of a teacher or mentor but rather the erotic drive of the free spirit’s own will for truth. Nietzsche only begins to gesture toward such a developmental pedagogy, though the way is open for its elucidation.

⁸³ *GM* III: 24, 113.

⁸⁴ *GM* III: 25, 119.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

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