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# *Perspectivism as* Ephexis *in Interpretation*

Jessica N. Berry
*Georgia State University*

## I. THE 'METAPHYSICAL' READINGS OF NIETZSCHE'S 'PERSPECTIVE' METAPHOR

In the last half century of scholarship on Nietzsche, perspectivism has taken its place alongside Nietzsche's other significant "doctrines": the eternal recurrence of the same, the *Übermensch,* the will to power.[1] In the abundant literature that has been generated on the topic, it has mostly been taken for granted that what Nietzsche offers us under the heading 'perspectivism' is a theory of truth. Though there are many and subtle differences among the extant interpretations of Nietzsche's metaphor of perspectivism, these differences lie mainly in the details. In broad strokes, there is widespread agreement—at least with respect to two points. The first (almost unquestioned) assumption of commentators on this issue has been simply *that there is a doctrine* called 'perspectivism', which is central to the overall scheme of Nietzsche's thought and which therefore demands unpacking. Second, most commentators have supposed that coming to a proper understanding of this doctrine depends upon fleshing out an account of Nietzsche's ontology or his theory of truth, of which they have taken his perspectivism to be either a consequence or an expression.

My primary task in this essay will be to challenge the second assumption, though the first warrants its own brief remark. On the face of it, it should be obvious that the attention Nietzsche's perspectivism has received over the years is somewhat incongruous with the relative scarcity of its discussion in his writing: he

mentions it [*Perspektivismus*] only a handful of times in his work, both published and unpublished.[2] To some extent, I take this to explain the overwhelming temptation for commentators to fashion perspectivism as a theory of truth: while straightforward 'perspective'-talk shows up much less often than we might like in Nietzsche, he makes many, many provocative comments about truth. So if one splices perspectivism and truth together right from the outset, Nietzsche has a great deal more to say about it. Properly understood, the claim that all knowledge is perspectival does have important work to do in Nietzsche's philosophy. But taken on their own terms, the few passages in which Nietzsche actually mentions 'perspectivism' simply do not support the weight of the interpretations that have been placed upon them. So in what follows, I will be using 'perspectivism' as a label of convenience, though I am inclined to regard my task here more as providing an interpretation of "Nietzsche's several remarks on perspective and perspectival knowing" than as unpacking the axioms of perspectivism *qua* doctrine.

At first blush, the wealth of treatments of perspectivism in Nietzsche could not appear more disparate: Nietzsche's observations about perspective have been taken as evidence for his development of a pragmatic theory of truth—a move necessitated by his commitment to an ontology of radical flux entailed by the infamous *Nachlass* comment that "there are no facts but only interpretations" (*KSA* 12: 315).[3] Relying equally heavily on the same quip and on the attribution to Nietzsche of a radical ontological pluralism, others have argued that Nietzsche rejects altogether the idea that any of our beliefs are or could be true; we have access only to a plurality of legitimate 'perspectives' on or interpretations of reality.[4] Still others have rejected the association of perspective with an ontology of flux and the idea that Nietzsche thinks we can say nothing true about the world, and have taken Nietzsche's perspectivism to imply, more narrowly, a rejection of the existence of transcendental truth makers for our claims. Thus, perspectivism offers a sort of response to Kant's transcendental idealism and grounds a neo-Kantian view of truth.[5]

Underlying the many and various readings of perspectivism, however, there is a common denominator, insofar as all ascribe to Nietzsche ambitious and complex metaphysical doctrines on which his perspectivism is founded or of which it is a consequence.[6] Glossing over the more subtle differences between them, then, I will refer to them collectively as *the metaphysical readings* of perspectivism. I will argue, by contrast, that perspectivism is neither a corollary nor the expression of any metaphysical view; rather, what force it has is purely epistemological.[7] Not only should we (1) resist thinking of perspectivism as the consequence of any metaphysical thesis Nietzsche holds (e.g., that reality is nothing but a chaotic flux, or that 'strong metaphysical anti-realism' is false), but we should (2) understand it as a position that undermines the attempt to secure justification for all such theses. The character of perspectivism, as I see it, is fundamentally skeptical—though that term must be taken in a sense that has been insufficiently appreciated so far in the scholarship on Nietzsche.[8] Specifically, I believe that the skepticism of which Nietzsche's 'perspective' comments are an expression is best understood on the model of Pyrrhonian

skepticism and should be taken as part and parcel of his attack on dogmatism in philosophy.[9]

Very briefly, the hallmark of Pyrrhonian skepticism is that its arguments aim to establish not the impossibility of knowledge but rather *epochē*, or suspension of judgment, on all matters. The practitioners of Pyrrhonism in antiquity make the radical claim that they maintain no beliefs (*dogmata*) at all and do not aim to acquire any.[10] Beginning from no determinate position, they merely employ the dogmatist's own tools in order to advance arguments that undermine their opponent's convictions. Importantly, they say they do not thereby become committed to the conclusions of any argument or to any theoretical position on the rules of inference they (opportunistically) employ. As I will show, perhaps the most important consequence of reading Nietzsche on this model is that it will demonstrate how Nietzsche remains *agnostic* on the metaphysical issues around which discussions of his perspectivism have heretofore revolved.[11]

In the sections that follow, I argue first that if we examine the best textual evidence we have for Nietzsche's perspectivism, we find little more than a commitment to the view that all knowing is 'situated', in a sense yet to be explained (section II). The claim that all knowing is perspectival is intended to undermine philosophical claims to 'objectivity' that Nietzsche regards as symptomatic of the ascetic ideal. In the following section, I examine parallels between this account of perspectivism and one of the arguments for suspension of judgment standardly advanced by Pyrrhonists (section III). And finally, I attempt to illuminate what a suspension of judgment will look like in Nietzsche's hands by drawing attention to his own urgent demand for *ephexis* in interpretation, and by explaining what he has in mind and why his demand carries the urgency it does (sections IV and V).

## II. THE TEXTUAL EVIDENCE: AN EXEGESIS OF *GM* 3: 12

The longest sustained discussion of perspectivism in Nietzsche's published work appears in the *Genealogy* (3: 12).[12] In this passage, Nietzsche introduces the visual metaphor for perspectivism that has become the starting point for so many discussions of it. Another look at this metaphor will show that it supports an interpretation that has not yet been offered in the literature. First, however, we should look at the passage in context: Nietzsche's task in the Third Essay of the *Genealogy* is to provide an answer to the question what the ascetic ideal *means* and to explain how it is that such an ideal has come to triumph despite its harmfulness to human beings.[13] He examines the meaning of asceticism for artists, for priests, and then in *GM* 3: 12, Nietzsche observes that the sickness he has just diagnosed in religious life occurs also in intellectual life—*GM* 3: 12 turns our attention from the figure of the ascetic priest to the seeker of knowledge. Following his introductory sketch of the ascetic priest in the previous section, Nietzsche poses the question of what a purely

*intellectual* expression of this ideal might look like: "Supposing that such an incarnate will to contradiction and anti-nature is prevailed upon to *philosophize*: on what will he vent his innermost capricious will?"[14]

What we discover in *GM* 3: 12 is that this phenomenon is not unique to the figure of the artist or priest; in fact, it appears to have a fairly precise intellectual or "spiritual" analog. The life of the ascetic priest, as we discover in *GM* 3: 11, is a life of "self-contradiction [*Selbstwiderspruchs*]" insofar as the priestly type denounces as 'evil' and intentionally frustrates all the instincts that would promote self-preservation, and especially those that promote self-preservation by making life enjoyable. Life itself is the object of priestly *ressentiment*, which is as much a desire for control and mastery as it is a feeling of biliousness and hatred: "here a *ressentiment* without equal rules, that of an unsatiated instinct and power-will that would like to become lord not over something living but rather over life itself . . . ; an attempt is made here to use energy to stop up the source of the energy; here the gaze is directed greenly and maliciously against physiological flourishing [*physiologische Gedeihen*] itself" (*GM* 3: 11). And just as the priest attempts to "use energy to stop up the source of the energy" and employs a "monstrous manner of valuation" to turn the instincts and desire for life against life itself, by placing the highest value on suffering and on beliefs and practices that frustrate the instincts of life, the ascetic ideal in philosophy "loves to turn reason against reason."

Here, the desire for knowledge—that which starts the seeker of knowledge on his path of inquiry in the first place—is frustrated by the adoption of a perverse ideal ("objectivity," in a sense yet to be explained) under which the very thing sought is recognized as being unattainable. Like the priest who takes pleasure in self-flagellation, against all prudential reason the seeker of knowledge engages in some self-flagellation of his own, by maintaining his ideal as the highest one and by persisting in his hopeless endeavor. This activity, like the activity of the priest, is what makes his life "self-contradictory" and a "paradox." Thus the philosopher under the sway of the ascetic ideal enjoys a "lust [that] reaches its peak when the ascetic self-contempt, self-derision of reason decrees: 'there *is* a realm of truth and being, but precisely *reason* is *excluded* from it!'" Just as the ascetic priest adopts a highest ideal that calls for his own annihilation (*qua* flesh-and-blood human being), the ascetic thinker or philosopher adopts a highest ideal that calls for his own annihilation (*qua* thinker), and therein lies his peculiar sickness.

This sickness is characterized by the philosopher's embrace of "'objectivity'" (which Nietzsche keeps always in quotation marks in this passage) as an epistemic ideal. Although there is a sense of 'objectivity' that Nietzsche will retain (which I distinguish in what follows), he asserts in *GM* 3: 12 that in the hands of the intellectual ascetic objectivity is "understood . . . as 'disinterested contemplation'." According to Nietzsche, the "pure knowledge" promised by this brand of objectivity is both symptomatic of an *unhealthy* ideal and a tendency toward self-contempt, and also "an absurdity and non-concept." First, in taking up "objectivity" as his ideal, the ascetic philosopher announces his desire to annihilate whatever is

uniquely his own—his own interests and prejudices, desires, and affects, and the particular color they lend to his perceptual and cognitive experience. The ascetic "objectivity" Nietzsche rejects fantasizes a knowing subject without any subjectivity and a desire to erase oneself from one's own picture of the world. It exclaims: "To refuse to believe in the self, to deny one's own 'reality'—what a triumph!" We find a fine example of this expression in Bertrand Russell's classic *The Problems of Philosophy*:

> The true philosophic contemplation . . . finds its satisfaction in every enlargement of the not-Self, in everything that magnifies the objects contemplated, and thereby the subject contemplating. Everything, in contemplation, that is personal or private, everything that depends upon habit, self-interest, or desire, distorts the object. . . . By thus making a barrier between subject and object, such personal and private things become a prison to the intellect. The free intellect will see as God might see, without a *here* and *now*, without hopes and fears, without the trammels of customary beliefs and traditional prejudices, calmly, dispassionately, in the sole and exclusive desire of knowledge—knowledge as impersonal, as purely contemplative, as it is possible for man to attain.[15]

"Contemplation without interest" as Russell illustrates it is something that Nietzsche openly disparages, asking at the conclusion of *GM* 3: 12, "But to eliminate the will altogether, to disconnect the affects one and all, supposing we were capable of this: what? would that not be to *castrate* the intellect?"[16]

Moreover, Nietzsche exhorts us to "guard ourselves . . . against the dangerous old conceptual fabrication that posited a 'pure, will-less, painless, timeless subject of knowledge'," indicating that ascetic "objectivity" is not only unhealthy, it is also illusory: Since "reason," "knowledge," and "spirituality" (understood as 'the activity of the intellect') are *always dependent upon* and *bound by* subjective interests and affects, they cannot be paired with such qualifiers as "pure," "absolute," or "in itself" without contradiction. "We" philosophers may guard against this lurking intellectual asceticism by keeping in mind that "there is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival knowing" (*GM* 3: 12). To see more clearly how this works, we can dig a bit deeper into the analogy Nietzsche proposes between *visual* and *cognitive* perspective.

All instances of visual perception are characterized (or qualified) by some "point of view" of the perceiver: a viewer stands in a certain position relative to an object, there is a determinate distance between them, the lighting is dim or it is bright, colored or not, the medium is translucent or transparent, the viewer may be nearsighted or farsighted. In a similar way, the mental representations furnished by cognition are qualified by a number of features including the prior beliefs, cognitive capacities, and practical interests of the knower. These features "situate" the knower with respect to the world. We can characterize perspectivism, then, as the view that all knowledge is "situated" in this way (i.e., qualified by these cognitive background conditions, just as all instances of visual perception are qualified by the

location and other relevant perceptual conditions). Insofar as viewing is an action that presupposes a human subject, and insofar as that subject must be someplace or other at any given time, there can be no such thing as a view from no *place* whatsoever. And just as there is no visual experience that is unconditioned by the perceiver's point of view, neither will there be any knowledge unconditioned by the epistemic peculiarities of the subject. In short, there is no "view from nowhere": this claim must be the upshot of the metaphor offered at *GM* 3: 12.[17]

This condition, if accepted, does away with the notion of ascetic objectivity Nietzsche wants to reject; but as I have suggested above it does not altogether rule out 'objectivity' in some appropriately qualified sense. This is what Nietzsche calls the "future 'objectivity'" of the intellect: one that apparently has to do with developing one's awareness of and control over the "background conditions" of knowledge, rather than contemplating "without interest." Immediately after he declares that there is "*only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival 'knowing'," he adds that "the *more* affects we allow to speak about a matter, *the more* eyes, different eyes, we know how to bring to bear on one and the same matter, that much more complete will our 'concept' of this matter, *our 'objectivity'* be" (*GM* 3: 12, final emphasis added). Lest we think that perspective-bound seeing is too limiting, Nietzsche is quick to remind us that we can *change* our point of view, one time or many times, in order to fill out our picture of an object.[18] We can walk around an object, examine it under various lighting conditions, look at it from close up or far away; or we can use other instruments, like magnifying lenses, to inspect its surface more closely. Nowadays we can use such technologies as x-ray and ultrasound to "see inside" objects whose surfaces once seemed unyieldingly opaque. All of these enhancements and adjustments of our perceptual apparatus, including the simple changes of position by which we view an object from different sides, promise to put us in an increasingly better epistemic position with respect to the object through the accretion of visual perspectives on it.

Effecting similar changes in our cognitive apparatus, of course, may be a more complicated affair: we would have to become aware of our prior beliefs and the relevant drives and interests that condition those beliefs, and learn how to manipulate them; we would have to adopt entirely new modes of valuation. Nietzsche realizes that this is a tall order. That is why he says:

> to see differently in this way for once, *to want* to see differently, is no small discipline and preparation of the intellect for its future 'objectivity'—the latter understood not as 'disinterested contemplation' (which is a non-concept and absurdity), but as the capacity to have one's pro and contra *in one's power*, and to shift them in and out: so that one knows how to make precisely the *difference* in perspectives and affective interpretations useful for knowledge.

Leaving aside for the moment the question whether everyone will be able to succeed in effecting the kind of control Nietzsche envisions, his point in this passage is that all the objectivity we could reasonably require is in principle available: to ask for "contemplation without interest" is to ask the impossible.

## III. THE SKEPTICAL CHARACTER OF PERSPECTIVISM

In the previous section, we saw how Nietzsche introduces the celebrated visual metaphor of perspectivism in the context of an attack on a particular notion of epistemic objectivity, which he connects with the ascetic ideal. But does the perspectivist metaphor do more than this? I think it does do more, though still not as much as has been claimed for it. I believe that perspectivism results in a deeply skeptical intuition that works not only against ascetic objectivity but also against the further epistemic goals and values of those who take it as an ideal. The intellectual ascetic does not value this brand of objectivity for its own sake, it seems, but for the sake of the fruit he thinks it will bear; he values it *extrinsically*. What he desires above all else and considers an *intrinsic* good, is secure knowledge about the real natures of things. That, after all, is supposed to be the reward of "true philosophic contemplation." The knowledge or possession of such truths merits the highest value in the "monstrous" system of valuation adopted by the ascetic philosopher. Insofar as perspectivism is effective in undermining this idealization of truth as intrinsically valuable, it will also be precluded from playing the sort of metaphysical role (e.g., as a theory of truth) that commentators have frequently supposed it does.

If the aim of ascetic objectivity is to reach the truth about the real natures of things, what is the aim or end of our allowing "*more* eyes, different eyes . . . to observe one thing" and "*more* affects . . . to speak about one thing" ("our 'objectivity'," as Nietzsche describes it)? According to Nietzsche, by learning how to take account of and manipulate these affects our "concept" (Nietzsche's quotes again) of the object of investigation becomes "more complete." Will we ever secure *complete*, exhaustive knowledge of objects in this way? If we examine once again the consequences of the visual metaphor, it seems the answer must be "no." For one thing, it clearly follows that there will be an upper limit to the number of perspectives I can enjoy on any one object, owing simply to my own finitude. So there are physical reasons, and there may be conceptual ones as well, for thinking that we can never have "all possible perspectives" on any object. Just as there is no "view from nowhere," there is also no "view from everywhere"—that is, no God's eye view—according to perspectivism. This differs from the idea that there is no view from nowhere (and that knowledge is always qualified) in saying that, in addition, human knowledge is always *incomplete*.[19]

But also, simply multiplying perspectives—those views of an object that we have always and only *against some background*—can give rise to skeptical worries. What we expect is that our visual impression of an object will be *enhanced* by our looking at it from different angles and under various conditions, but this does not happen in every case. Sometimes our senses give us conflicting information. That different points of view yield different and perhaps incompatible conceptions of ordinary objects is sufficient to generate a familiar set of skeptical concerns: the relativity of perception is the oldest and best-known source material for skeptical

challenges. In the classic case of the tower that looks round from a distance and square when we're standing nearby, for instance, we receive two incompatible reports from our senses, which cannot both be true. For if we believe that a physical object such as a tower cannot genuinely instantiate two contradictory (or even contrary) properties (in the same way at the same time)—on pain of violating the basic principle of non-contradiction[20]—then at a minimum we are forced to conclude that a choice must be made about which description represents the "real" state of affairs. In order to make our choice, we must call upon further criteria (e.g., what the science of optics tells us about the relevance of physical proximity or adequate lighting to accurate visual perception). In the tower case the decision seems fairly straightforward; but it is important to note that in the absence of reliable second-order criteria, or where the theory that supports our decision is in question, we have no non-arbitrary way of deciding which of the two conflicting sense-reports to privilege. Skepticism gains a foothold by challenging the notion that there are any legitimate criteria by which we might make this choice.

In the skeptical literature in antiquity, we can find such arguments directly from the "situated-ness" of human perception to skeptical conclusions. In Book IX of his *Lives and Opinions of the Eminent Philosophers*, over which Nietzsche labored as a student of classical philology,[21] Diogenes Laertius lists such an argument in his report on the Ten Modes of Pyrrhonian skepticism. In what he lists as the seventh mode (the primary sources differ on the order of the modes), he states the point baldly: "Since it is not possible to perceive these things [objects] apart from places and positions, it is not known what their nature is" (*DL* 9: 86).[22] By "places and positions," Diogenes refers to just the sorts of "background conditions" we have considered here in the case of visual perception: the distance between the viewer and the object, the position of the object relative to the viewer, and so on.[23] "According to this mode," Diogenes tells us, "things that seem big appear small, square things appear round, level things appear to have projections," and so on. Because this is so, he concludes tersely, we do not know how these things are in themselves.

But what line of reasoning is at work here? And how are we to understand the conclusion and its significance? Unfortunately, this is virtually all Diogenes has to report on this skeptical argument, and he leaves both of these questions unanswered. Fortunately, however, Diogenes is neither the only source nor the best source for the Ten Modes, and we can look to Sextus Empiricus, the central source for Pyrrhonian skepticism, to spell out this same argument in a bit more detail. In *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, Sextus lists this argument as the fifth mode, calling it "the one depending on positions and intervals and places" (*PH* 1: 118).[24] As in his accounts of the other modes, this one is accompanied by a rich catalog of examples, from the pedestrian tower case and the oar that looks bent in the water to more entertaining and exotic observations:

> Eggs appear soft in the bird but hard in the air. Lyngurion [amber] appears liquid inside the lynx, but hard in the air.[25] Coral appears soft in the sea, but hard in the air. And sound appears different when produced in a pipe, in a flute, or simply in the air.[26] (*PH* 1: 119)

Returning to the argument itself, Sextus summarizes the force of the fifth mode in this way:

> Since, then, all apparent things are observed in some place and from some interval and in some position, and each of these produces a great deal of variation in appearances, as we have suggested, we shall be forced to arrive at suspension of judgment by these modes too. (*PH* 1: 121)

Both Diogenes and Sextus make the basic "perspectivist" point here that perception is always qualified by the point of view of the perceiver. Moreover, each perception will be qualified uniquely. This results, crucially, in *conflicts* between appearances: an object has appearance *A* from perspective *P*, contrary appearance $A^*$ from perspective $P^*$, and so forth.[27] But so what? we may ask (especially of Diogenes). Sextus has an answer: these conflicts of appearance force upon us just the kinds of choice we discussed above. The Pyrrhonist then takes it as his task to demonstrate that no such choice is justified; for instance, one cannot be made without running afoul of one of the *further* modes of skepticism. Since no choice is warranted we are "forced" to suspend judgment on the real nature of the object in question—the very issue his dogmatic opponent desired to settle. Sextus's full argument runs as follows:

> For anyone wishing to give preference to some of these appearances over others will be attempting the impossible. If he makes his declaration simply and without proof, he will not be credible. But if he wants to use a proof, then if he says the proof is false, he will overturn himself, and if he says the proof is true, he will be required to give a proof of its being true, and another proof of that, since it too has to be true, and so on ad infinitum. But it is impossible to establish infinitely many proofs. And so he will not be able to prefer one appearance to another with a proof either. But if no one can decide among the above appearances either without proof or with proof, suspension of judgment is inferred: we are no doubt able to say what each thing appears to be like given this position or that interval or this place, but we are not able, for the above reasons, to declare what it is like in its nature. (*PH* 1: 121–23)

The first dilemma that Sextus forces upon his imaginary dogmatic opponent catches him up in one of the so-called Five Modes, attributed to Agrippa; here, the mode from hypothesis (asserting an unargued-for premise). Next, Sextus runs him aground on the mode from infinite regress. Having exhausted the available options, Sextus says, suspension of judgment follows.

Still, we may not be moved by the Pyrrhonist's argument: after all, our perceptual life is full of the conflicts of appearance Sextus and Diogenes mention, but we do not go about mired in perplexity about how to solve them. We are not in doubt about the genuinely straight shape of the stubbornly bent-seeming oar when we observe it in the water because we know that the angle of refraction of light changes in the medium of the water in a way that has a predictable effect on the appearance of the oar.[28] There is a theory we appeal to that explains the phenomenon. In fact—unless we happen to be physicists studying the properties of light—we generally take the theory for granted, making our appeals to it so quickly and almost unconsciously

that the conflict of appearances does not affect our ability to interpret the data. But to think that this appeal to theory will quiet the Pyrrhonist is to underestimate him. As we have said, his skepticism gets a foothold precisely by challenging the legitimacy of such appeals. Beyond his being able to draw on other modes of skepticism that force the dogmatist into circularity, regress, or the like, a Pyrrhonist even in Sextus's era can point to a variety of competing optical theories (widely available at the time) to challenge the choice of one theory over others that seem to do the same explanatory work. The argument advanced at the level of perception works equally well at the level of theory, and the skeptic's conclusion, here as before, is that we cannot but suspend judgment on the issue at hand. We can see how this challenge, if it is successful, yields a skeptical technique that can be used to undercut the results of not only scientific but just about any other investigations. And this outcome suits the skeptic's largely *ad hominem* ends: Skepticism in antiquity is primarily a critical enterprise, and its aim is not to propound positive views of its own but to discredit those of the dogmatists.

Would Nietzsche thus be committed to skepticism about the results of scientific as well as metaphysical inquiry? Not necessarily. Nietzsche, like the skeptic, takes aim at a very specific target—in Nietzsche's case, those dogmatists who neglect or deny what he elsewhere calls "*perspective,* the basic condition of all life."[29] So although his perspectivism does share the *ad hominem* spirit of Pyrrhonism, the scope of his skepticism may be less problematic, especially if it were restricted to claims that transcend those for which we could have empirical evidence. As we saw earlier, the proposition that "knowing" or cognizing is like perceiving implies that it is "situated" in much the same way: it is always qualified by interests, desires, and affects. Scientific activity in particular and intellectual inquiry in general proceed "honestly" to the extent that they maintain an awareness of this perspectival nature of knowledge. "We see," he explains in *The Gay Science,* "that science also rests on a faith; there simply is no science 'without presuppositions'" (*GS* 344). The point is reiterated at *GM* 3: 24, with a further explanation: "Strictly speaking, there is no such thing as science 'without any presuppositions'; this thought does not bear thinking through, it is paralogical: a philosophy, a 'faith', must always be there first of all, so that science can acquire from it a direction, a meaning, a limit, a method, a *right* to exist." There is even the suggestion that it can be used to advantage: that the one who "knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge" will be that much better at interpreting the data both in observation and reflection (*GM* 3: 12). Confronted with conflicting claims about metaphysical objects or competing views about the underlying structure of reality, however, we should suspend judgment—these are not questions that should interest us—because a decision could be made only on the basis of an interest-independent criterion *that is not available*. On this account, it would be just as audacious to deny as to assert the truth of claims like the one Nietzsche singles out as the height of asceticism in philosophy: "*there is* a realm of truth and being, but reason is *excluded* from it!" (*GM* 3: 12) The verification conditions of such claims are

beyond the reach of human beings, whose epistemic capabilities are perspectivally conditioned.[30]

## IV. NIETZSCHE'S SUSPENSION OF JUDGMENT

For the Pyrrhonian skeptic, the connection between our perceptual and cognitive limits and the suspension of judgment (*epochē*) which they say follows from those limits, not to mention their overall emphasis on suspension of judgment, is much more obvious than it is in Nietzsche. As both Diogenes and Sextus explain, it is the practice of maintaining suspension of judgment that defines genuine skeptical practice and sets the skeptic apart from the dogmatists he criticizes. In most instances, that criticism is directed at Stoic *dogmata* (though the Pyrrhonian skeptics did not spare Aristotelians, Atomists, Heracliteans, and others). But the way Sextus Empiricus uses the term, 'dogmatists' also includes *other kinds of skeptics*: the Academic skeptics, in particular, ran afoul of the Pyrrhonists for their allegedly dogmatic assertion that things are inapprehensible, and that knowledge is therefore impossible (*PH* 1: 3).[31] To the Pyrrhonist this claim is no less dogmatic than, say, Aristotle's claim that fire, air, earth, and water are the material principles of all things, which helps to illustrate the inclusiveness of the Pyrrhonists' category 'dogmatists' (*PH* 3: 30–32).

So when Sextus tells us that "the most fundamental kinds of philosophy are reasonably thought to be *three*: the Dogmatic, the Academic, and the Skeptical" (*PH* 1: 4, emphasis added), it is important to understand that what divides members of the first two groups from each other is in Sextus's opinion less significant than what divides both of them from the Pyrrhonists (i.e., 'skeptics' proper). As far as these skeptics are concerned, there are two types of people, so to speak: those who suspend judgment on "unclear"[32] matters such as the real natures of objects and those who do not. He explains that there are three "likely results" of investigation into any question or subject: "either a discovery, or a denial of discovery and a confession of inapprehensibility, or else a continuation of the investigation" (*PH* 1: 1). As he sees it, this exhausts the possibilities. As we might expect, the three kinds of philosophy he names correspond to the three types of investigative result. Dogmatists are those who tend to end their investigations by pronouncing on their various discoveries, like the one attributed to Aristotle above. Academics (the inheritors of Plato's Academy), in turn, are characterized—or caricatured—as those who throw up their hands and end investigations by declaring the inapprehensibility of things. Either way, the final judgment calls a halt to inquiry and closes off the path to future investigation, for the simple reason that once we think we have found what we are looking for, we generally stop looking.[33] What is important for Sextus is that in both cases, the inquiries come to an end. "The Skeptics," by contrast (and in fact, by definition), "are still investigating" (*PH* 1: 3): the verb *skeptesthai* means 'to inquire'

and is a cognate of *skeptikos*, which eventually finds its way into English as 'skeptical'.[34] The way to keep the spirit of investigation alive, Pyrrhonists maintain, is by not coming to rest with a judgment one regards as true.

It is worth emphasizing here how the Pyrrhonists' scrupulous suspension of judgment (*epochē*) also distinguishes their skeptical practice from its modern relatives. The "skepticism" that commentators have often discussed in the course of their developing interpretations of perspectivism is no sort of skepticism at all in this (Classical) sense. For example, when Danto calls perspectivism "Nietzsche's peculiar form of skepticism," he uses 'skepticism' more or less interchangeably with 'nihilism' (since on Danto's account, Nietzsche is supposed to hold that there are no facts and no things).[35] This position is not a skepticism but a negative metaphysical dogmatism. Indeed, on all of what I have called the metaphysical readings, Nietzsche either accepts (on some accounts) or denies (on others) fairly strident positions about the nonexistence of facts, truths, things, or things-in-themselves. By now it should be clear that "Kantian skepticism" (i.e., that knowledge of things that are "really real"—that is, things-in-themselves—is in principle unattainable, owing to the nature of those things) similarly advances a negative dogmatism rather than a skepticism in the Classical sense. The declaration that knowledge of them is impossible is rooted in a position that is far from cautious about the hidden nature of reality. The skepticism illustrated by perspectivism, on the other hand, is both more cautious and more sophisticated than these modern varieties.

Yet caution on any front, not to mention the subtle suspension of judgment practiced by the Pyrrhonists, may still seem to be an odd thing to attribute to Nietzsche. However, even in some of his most bombastic works, Nietzsche indicates that what sets his thought apart from those thinkers he criticizes is in fact a similar attitude. Here, we get an important glimpse of how Nietzsche's training as a classical philologist informs his philosophical outlook. Nietzsche saw himself as a philologist until the very end of his productive career, and philology is a discipline that *advances* by means of a certain kind of (at least methodological) skepticism: it is part of the business of philology to question the boundaries of established authorial canons, to challenge the authenticity of manuscripts, and so on.[36] This attitude is evident, for example, in *Beyond Good and Evil*:

> Forgive me as an old philologist who cannot desist from the malice of putting his finger on bad modes of interpretation: but 'nature's conformity to law', of which you physicists talk so proudly, as though—why, it exists only owing to your interpretation and bad 'philology'. (*BGE* 22)

Again, there is no need to see this statement as standing in tension with Nietzsche's frequent praise of the sciences and their methods. What he condemns in this passage is the physicist who talks proudly or arrogantly about nature as though—we can now venture to fill in the lacuna—as though his hypotheses about it managed to nail down a truth about the deep structure of reality. That view is one that could never itself be confirmed by the methods endorsed by that science; how could it be demonstrated, given the perspectival conditions on human knowledge? "Nature's

conformity to law," then, is not so much a proper scientific hypothesis as a practical principle that would guide scientific work, something the physicist (if he accepts it) must take on faith as he turns to an investigation of the "laws" themselves.

At least two questions present themselves here, however. First, doubt about this view may seem simply unwarranted: what counterargument should lead us to question nature's conformity to law? Second, why should "good philology" require suspension of judgment as a response? And what does the one have to do with the other? First, recall that the Pyrrhonist motivates suspension of judgment primarily by invoking either conflicts of appearance or conflict between competing theoretical explanations. What happens in the absence of an apparent conflict? As we might have suspected, the skeptic does not give in: for though there may be no conflict on the horizon, the skeptic will say, we cannot rule out the possibility of future conflict. The fact that an explanatory hypothesis has no current competitor worthy of serious consideration does not entitle us to embrace it and consider the case closed, for it is easy enough to point to instances in the past in which a theory whose truth had come to be taken for granted is overthrown.[37] And so, in the spirit of providing an equipollent argument to oppose the physicist's supposition about the law-like character of nature, Nietzsche proposes that we should not treat it as established since "somebody might come along who, with opposite intentions and modes of interpretation [i.e., "opposite" cognitive background conditions], could read out of the same 'nature', and with regard to the same phenomena, rather the tyrannically inconsiderate and relentless enforcement of claims of power" (*BGE* 22). That is, there might well be another interpretation, with an opposing conclusion, that is equally consistent with the phenomena. Moreover, we would have no resources with which to decide the conflict.

In fact, it is interesting to note of this passage that the claim with which Nietzsche chooses to oppose that of the "physicists" is the one frequently attributed to him as another central metaphysical "doctrine," the "will to power." The description is invested with all of Nietzsche's usual force and vivacity, though here it is ascribed to an imaginary third person as an explicitly hypothetical statement: "somebody might come along," he says, "an interpreter who would picture the unexceptional and unconditional aspects of all 'will to power' so vividly," though "he might, nevertheless, end by asserting the same about this world as you do." Before we can latch on to this competing hypothesis, Nietzsche continues: "Supposing that this is also only interpretation—and you will be eager enough to make this objection?—well, so much the better" (*BGE* 22). So much the better, indeed, if the point of the exercise is not to determine which of these opposing views reflects the way things are in themselves, but to demonstrate the absurdity of thinking we can resolve the conflict. The value of the "will to power" hypothesis—in this passage, at least—lies in its balancing and opposing the pronouncements of "proud" and overambitious physicists.

But now, what makes the physicists' mode of interpretation "bad philology"? In addition to the evidence in *BGE* 22 that it is their incautious attitude, we have

another answer to this question in a later passage. Near the end of a particularly visceral assault on Christian dogma in *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche assails its opposition to "all intellectual well-constitutedness" (*A* 52). So, on top of his several other complaints about Christianity—for instance, its devastating effects on higher culture—Nietzsche here suggests that there are intellectual grounds for objecting to it. Among those reasons, he includes the theologian's "incapacity for philology," explaining that

> Philology is to be understood here in a very wide sense as the art of reading well—of being able to read off a fact *without* falsifying it by interpretation, *without* losing caution, patience, subtlety in the desire for understanding. Philology as *ephexis* in interpretation: whether it be a question of books, newspaper reports, fate or the weather. (*A* 52)

Philology, understood in a broad sense as Nietzsche understands it, is an interpretive art. Though he often uses the language of *textual* interpretation, much of his talk is metaphorical in these contexts and his use of 'interpretation' is by no means restricted to reading: we are doing important interpretive work whenever we perceive and try to understand the phenomenal world—hence his addition of "the weather" and "newspaper reports."[38] And to do it well, Nietzsche says, is to employ "caution, patience, [and] subtlety." Now perhaps these attitudes alone would not indicate that a genuine suspension is what Nietzsche has in mind. But he makes the further claim in this passage that philology means "*ephexis* in interpretation." As Nietzsche is well aware, the Greek term *ephexis* means 'a stopping or checking', and it comes from the verb *epechein*, which itself means 'to hold back' or 'to check'. In Hellenistic skepticism "holding back" or refraining from judgment is what we said characterizes the activity of a skeptic: in fact, the term *epechein* is the *source* of the Pyrrhonian skeptics' concept *epochē*.[39] To think of philology "as *ephexis* in interpretation" indicates that what makes good interpretation or good philology *good* is a type of suspension of judgment on the metaphysical matters Nietzsche is worried about.[40]

## V. THE DIAGNOSIS OF DOGMATISM

We might yet be tempted to ask why the skeptic or Nietzsche (or anyone) ought to resist what seems to be a powerful natural tendency of ours: that is, to form beliefs and come to conclusions about the things that puzzle us. So we must ask: what exactly is to be gained by holding back from commitment? Since the answer to that question lies in what practitioners of skepticism in the Pyrrhonian tradition take to be wrong with dogmatism, it is instructive to look at their diagnoses of dogmatic ills. 'Diagnosis', by the way, is a term that is more than just metaphorical in the context of a discussion of Greek skepticism, since the history of skepticism and medical practice in antiquity are closely intertwined. Sextus Empiricus, for example, was

a physician by trade and affiliated (as his name would indicate) with the Medical Empiricists, who "rejected the theoretical pretensions of the Dogmatists [a competing school, also known under the name 'Rationalists'] and held that experience alone, without need for grand theory, was all that was required for sound medical practice."[41] No doubt it is this affiliation that motivates Sextus's well-known simile about skeptical arguments being used as purgative drugs,[42] as well as his comment in the final passage of *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* that, "Skeptics are philanthropic and wish to cure by argument, as far as they can, the conceit and rashness of the Dogmatists" (*PH* 3: 280).

This understanding of the therapeutic roots of skepticism, too, puts in proper perspective the role of skeptical argumentation. The Modes, as we know, offer strategies for undermining the justification of particular claims advanced by their dogmatic opponents. But in the end, the skeptics' arguments are tools pressed into the service of a fundamentally eudaimonistic psychological project: to get those dogmatists who are able (though not all will be) to see that their own philosophical *commitments* prevent them from realizing the goal of their philosophical *practice*—namely the good and untroubled life. In the Hellenistic era this charge was a serious one, since virtually every major school of thought identified the goal of philosophy with *eudaimonia*, often translated (somewhat crudely) as 'happiness' or the good life.[43] Many of them, furthermore, considered 'tranquility' or freedom from disturbance (*ataraxia*)[44] a central component of happiness. The skeptics alleged that dogmatists fail to achieve *ataraxia* and so fail to realize what was commonly considered to be the best life because they are confused about both the nature and value of knowledge and about the psychological effects of making judgments and maintaining opinions.

Dogmatists place a high premium on achieving epistemic security, and dogmatic philosophy proceeds on the basis of crucial presuppositions about knowledge beyond its attainability (or unattainability) and its stability: chief among these are presuppositions about its value. According to the skeptical physician's diagnosis, dogmatists are under the impression either that knowledge (discovering the truth) is good intrinsically, or else that it is a route to happiness and freedom from disturbance (and hence an extrinsic good). Either way, they are deeply misguided. The first case, so the skeptic observes, is simply another instance of dogmatic rashness since—owing to the endless disputations about such matters—we do not know whether anything is good or bad in itself.[45] Often, what is thought to be a good turns out to be an evil, and vice versa; or else the same thing appears good to one person, but not good to another. Thus, if the dogmatist pursues knowledge for its own sake (because he thinks it an intrinsic good), he has already committed himself to a judgment about something that is "unclear" or under dispute and that he is incapable of demonstrating.[46]

At other times, the skeptic explains, dogmatists seem to come to their practice by a different route. They seek knowledge and value it because they find not-knowing restless or unfulfilling, in some cases even disturbing. "Men of talent," so Sextus calls

them, "troubled by the anomaly in things and puzzled as to which of them they should rather assent to, came to investigate what in things is true and what false, thinking that by deciding these issues they would become tranquil" (*PH* 1: 12). For these individuals, the only point of investigating is eventually to terminate investigation, so as to satisfy a need or end some discomfort. But the freedom from disturbance (*ataraxia*) the dogmatist expects does not follow, according to the Pyrrhonist: The dogmatist finds himself troubled by some conflict of appearances and desires an explanation. After vigorous investigation, he settles upon an explanatory hypothesis and considers the issue solved. Perhaps, if he is particularly confident about his theory, he does a little proselytizing or—encouraged by the receptiveness of others who have been troubled by the same phenomenon and are ready for an explanation—even founds a school. As his reputation gets around, however, he experiences challenges to his theory from all corners, and now must turn his energy and attention to defending it.[47] According to Sextus Empiricus, this will be the source of new anxieties for the dogmatists:

> When they lack what they believe to be good, they take themselves to be persecuted by natural evils and they pursue what (so they think) is good. And when they have acquired these things, they experience more troubles; for they are elated beyond reason and measure, and in fear of change and they do anything so as not to lose what they believe to be good. (*PH* 1: 27)

The situation is the same as with someone whom we might imagine to be miserly or excessively greedy.[48] Believing that wealth is good, the greedy person desires to acquire as much as possible and feels himself deprived if he does not have it. Displays of wealth around him make him jealous and resentful, causing him all sorts of misery. But he is resolute in his pursuit of wealth, perhaps passing up opportunities for other goods because his excessive valuation of money makes him blind to them. And as his wealth grows, he is wildly happy about it and he relishes thinking of himself as "a rich person"; he begins to lose sight of the fact that *in itself* it has no genuine value, and he becomes insatiable and even further fixated. Once he has amassed a fortune, however, he begins to fear losing it: having invested it with the power to make him happy, or even *complete*, he could suffer its loss only cruelly, if at all. Now, his life is consumed with the project of safeguarding his assets—again, perhaps at the expense of any number of other opportunities. Not only is he beset by further and further psychological troubles, he also loses out on life in some important respect.

The Pyrrhonists, however, end up getting it just right. They have an account of the human good (for the skeptics also accept *ataraxia* as the aim of their philosophical practice)[49] and have secured a method for attaining it. "Like their Hellenistic brethren," says Mark McPherran, "the Pyrrhonists were moral naturalists, thinking that since they possessed an accurate appraisal of human nature, and a methodology uniquely sensitive to it, they could deliver what no other school could: genuine human happiness."[50] So we learn from Sextus that skepticism and dogmatism share

a common source: the skeptics (just like the dogmatists) "began to do philosophy in order to decide among appearances and to apprehend which are true and which are false in order to become tranquil" (*PH* 1: 26).[51] Unlike the dogmatists, however, the skeptics in the course of their investigations "came upon equipollent dispute, and being unable to decide this they suspended judgment. And when they suspended judgment, tranquility in matters of opinion followed fortuitously," or as Sextus famously says, "as a shadow follows a body" (*PH* 1: 26, 29).

*Prima facie*, of course, the skeptics' esteem for *ataraxia* seems distinctly un-Nietzsche-like.[52] Nietzsche, for whom "it almost determines the order of rank *how* deeply men can suffer" (*BGE* 270), has no kind words for the hermit, whose response to suffering is flight (either by isolation, in the interest of "self-preservation," or by suicide). If the skeptical sage is such a hermit, committed unreflectively to the proposition that suffering is (necessarily) an evil and to be avoided, then he will have little in common with Nietzsche and his "philosophers of the future." But first, as we have just seen, the judgment that anything is good or bad by nature is a paradigm case of what the Pyrrhonist diagnoses as "Dogmatic rashness." Second, we should not automatically equate 'trouble', which the skeptic aims to avoid, with 'suffering'. When the skeptic identifies happiness with freedom from troubles, he has in view not troubles *tout court*, but primarily psychological troubles and maladies—unrest. And as we have seen, Nietzsche's preoccupation in the passages of the *Genealogy* that we have considered is with the psychopathology of *ressentiment* and its relationship to asceticism in all its forms. Finally, the skeptic does not desire to withdraw from his life or to become complacent: that is in fact one of his charges against the dogmatist, insofar as he ceases to investigate. It is the *dogmatist*, under this description, who desires nothing more than "freedom from pain"—the pain of uncertainty. As Sextus has it, the skeptic is the only one who remains intellectually alive: he continues to inquire. And he does so not *in spite of* his suspension of judgment but *because of* it.

Nietzsche, too, recognizes how many human beings experience uncertainty as a kind of pain, and he is an acute diagnostician of what he sometimes describes as the "metaphysical need" that underlies loyalty to ascetic ideals.[53] As a rule, human beings have an ardent desire to adopt some ideal or system of values that validates their own existence and gives meaning to their lives. This drive, a symptom of weakness in Nietzsche's view, accounts in part for the tenacity of all ascetic thinking:

> The demand that one wants by all means that something should be firm (while on account of the ardor of this demand one is easier and more negligent about the demonstration of this certainty)—this, too, is still the demand for support, a prop, in short, that *instinct of weakness* which, to be sure, does not create religious, metaphysical systems, and convictions of all kinds but—conserves them. (*GS* 347)[54]

As we have seen, dogmatists are those who place a high premium on epistemic security (even if it is a false sense of security). In *Beyond Good and Evil,* Nietzsche contemplates the "metaphysician's ambition to hold a hopeless position, [which]

may participate and ultimately prefer even a handful of 'certainty' to a whole carload of beautiful possibilities; there may even be puritanical fanatics of conscience who prefer even a certain nothing to an uncertain something to lie down on—and die. But this," he says, "is nihilism and the sign of a despairing, mortally weary soul" (*BGE* 10). Under this umbrella, there is room for both the dogmatist and the "skeptic" who asserts that the nature of things is inapprehensible. But as Nietzsche says of those he often calls the 'philosophers of the future', "they will certainly not be dogmatists." Rather, they will be "curious to a vice, investigators to the point of cruelty" and constantly restless—genuine Zetetics ('seekers', as the Pyrrhonists called themselves).[55]

This critical strategy emerges again and again in the *Genealogy*, and also in *Beyond Good and Evil*,[56] which opens with a meditation on the question of the will to truth in philosophy. In what may be Nietzsche's most-quoted preface, he begins: "Supposing truth is a woman—what then? Are there not grounds for the suspicion that all philosophers, insofar as they were dogmatists [*sofern sie Dogmatiker waren*], have been very inexpert about women? That the gruesome seriousness, the clumsy obtrusiveness with which they have usually approached truth so far have been awkward and very improper methods for winning a woman's heart?" As the rest of the book seeks to show, there are answers to these apparently rhetorical questions: yes, there are grounds for thinking that philosophers have been inexpert at winning over women (i.e., discovering the truth of things). What are those grounds? They include the existence of perennial dispute concerning philosophical matters (to which Nietzsche draws our attention in *BGE* 25). The project of metaphysics, he alleges, has failed to settle the issue of what lies behind the phenomena and the failure is due, at least in part, to the attachment to success characteristic of the dogmatic approach. (Nietzsche nowhere guarantees that his approach will yield "success" —on the dogmatists' terms at any rate.) So what is to be gained by holding back from judgment? To become a good philologist, a subtle interpreter; to be someone for whom morality becomes (and remains) a problem; and to be one who avoids the poison of the ascetic ideal that values security at the cost of honesty.

It is important to remember here that Nietzsche's question is not, "What is true?" but, "What is *truth*? What *value* does it have? And, perhaps most importantly, what does our attachment to it reveal about *us*?" These are the central questions of the *Genealogy*, as its preface indicates; these questions, and also the question what value our value judgments have and whether they promote or hinder our flourishing (*GM* P: 3). We began with an examination of what the attachment to objectivity, understood as disinterested contemplation, reveals about the ascetic philosopher—it reveals *ressentiment* and a will to self-annihilation. *Ressentiment* is surely one of the gravest psychological maladies, for Nietzsche, and it is an obstacle to flourishing if anything is: in the ascetic priest, "the gaze is directed greenly and maliciously against physiological flourishing" (*GM* 3: 11), and in the ascetic philosopher, toward psychological and intellectual flourishing. To guard against it, it may do to keep in view "'*perspective*, the basic condition of all life" (*BGE*: P) and maintain *ephexis* in interpretation.

Few commentators have failed to notice Nietzsche's hostility to dogmatism. But most have failed to appreciate the point that if his perspectivism is deployed as part of the attack on dogmatism, it will be self-defeating if perspectivism, in the end, just stands in for an equally dogmatic position. A recognition of the likeness between perspectivism and skepticism, and an understanding of the roots of that skepticism in a tradition with which Nietzsche is well familiar, should together force us to appreciate his unwillingness to defend the audacious positions attributed to him by the metaphysical readings. What is more, it will illuminate the connection between Nietzsche's view of knowledge and his commitment to psychological health, thereby bringing Nietzsche's role as philosophical psychologist into (appropriately) sharper relief.

## NOTES

1. There are a few earlier discussions, of course, including Hans Vaihinger's 1911 essay, "Nietzsche and His Doctrine of Conscious Illusion" (in Solomon [1973]) and Hermann Nohl's "Eine historische Quelle zu Nietzsches Perspektivismus" (*Zeitschrift für Philosophie und philosophiche Kritik* 149: 106–15) in 1913. See also George Morgan (1941) and Martin Heidegger, who takes up the issue in his published lectures on the will to power. But Arthur Danto (1965) appears to be responsible for bringing this issue to the forefront of Nietzsche scholarship in English.
2. A handful of commentators have drawn special attention to the discrepancy between the number of 'perspective' occurrences in Nietzsche and the (ever-increasing) treatments of it in the secondary literature. Robin Small importantly observes that, "Nietzsche uses the word *Perspektivismus* in only a few places, and in none of these does it refer to any philosophical doctrine. Rather he takes it to be synonymous with *Perspektivität*, which clearly refers to the property of being perspectival. It is this that Nietzsche attributes to all forms of human knowledge, and to all objects of human knowledge" (2001: 48). That Small attributes to Nietzsche the ontological thesis that *all objects of human knowledge* have 'the property of being perspectival', by the way, shows that he adopts the general approach I will characterize here. See also Cox (1999: 109–11).
3. In his chapter on "Nietzsche's Perspectivism," Danto (1965: 71 ff) takes this comment to mean that "no distinction which we make, even the plainest distinction between thing and thing, has the slightest basis in reality. There are no distinctions between things because the concept of thinghood is itself already a fiction." Danto argues that if it is possible for any of our beliefs to be true, they must be so in some unorthodox way. They cannot be true *by virtue of correspondence to facts* for the simple reason that there are no facts for them to correspond *to*; there is only chaotic flux. Thus, Danto requires Nietzsche to adopt as a new, pragmatic criterion of truth whatever "enhances and facilitates life." Hereafter, citations of Nietzsche's *Nachlass* writings will refer to the *KSA* (*Kritische Studienausgabe: Sämtliche Werke*); this particular remark, however, appears also as *The Will to Power* §481.
4. I locate the so-called postmodern interpreters of Nietzsche here, though the clearest expression of this view is surely in Nehamas (1985). He agrees with Danto that this *Nachlass* remark commits Nietzsche to a radical ontological pluralism: Nietzsche's perspectivism is "an effort to move away from the idea that the world possesses any features that are in principle prior to and independent of interpretation. In itself, the world has no features, and these can therefore be neither correctly nor wrongly represented" (1985: 45). Consequently, "we are *necessarily incapable* of representing the world accurately" (1985: 45, emphasis added). Grimm (1977: 67–69) offers a similar account: for Nietzsche "the world has no univocal meaning" because "there is no world in itself." Rather, "reality for Nietzsche is a turbulent, enigmatic chaos of power-quanta and power-constellations locked in combat with one another for more power." More recently, Cox (1999: 163) follows Nehamas' "ubiquity of interpretation" view: "Against all realisms, Nietzsche maintains that every ontology is the construction of an interpretation and that no world would remain over after

the subtraction of every interpretation. Against idealism, he argues that interpretations are not the productions of isolated subjects or minds but complexes of evaluation and power that traverse the entire spectrum of organic life and are discernible even in the inorganic world."

5. See Clark (1990: 128) and the many commentators who have followed her neo-Kantian reading. Leiter (1994) describes himself as "in basic agreement with Clark" and her interpretation of perspectivism as ruling out strong metaphysical realism (1994: 335, 350). Hales and Welshon (2000) argue that Nietzsche holds several versions of perspectivism: His 'epistemic perspectivism' is parasitic on his concept of truth and his attack on the notion of the thing-in-itself; thus, it has no independent aim, but is *simply* a consequence of his metaphysical views (2000: 114–15). Nietzsche's 'truth perspectivism' they describe as a complement to his ontological views and his rejection of the thing-in-itself (2000: 18). Poellner (2001: 111) conceives of perspectivism primarily as a metaphysical anti-realism, i.e., the denial of strong metaphysical realism, roughly along those lines drawn by Clark. See also Green (2002).
6. Recent exceptions include Anderson (1998) and Leiter (2002). Both are careful to formulate their reconstructions of perspectivism in strictly epistemological terms, although both still characterize the motivation for perspectivism in terms of a metaphysical dispute (i.e., as a reaction to Kant's transcendental idealism).
7. A brief *caveat*: I do not claim that Nietzsche is offering an epistemology, or theory of knowledge, under the heading of 'perspectivism'. Nietzsche is no more an epistemologist than he is a metaphysician, on my view. That is to say, he does not set out to construct a theory of knowledge any more than he sets out to offer a metaphysical system or a theory of truth. (For a persuasive argument that "Nietzsche is ultimately not interested in (theories of) truth," see Gemes (1992).) Nevertheless, when he says that there is "*only* a perspectival 'knowing'," he does make an important and interesting epistemological claim, and one that is worth investigating in its own right.
8. A number of commentators have observed that perspectivism has or may have skeptical implications. But typically, in these discussions, 'skepticism' is taken in an entirely non-technical way, as a term needing no special treatment or explanation. It is used to indicate little more than a fairly radical and mostly negative view of truth. The so-called postmodern readings of Nietzsche especially have encouraged the association of perspectivism with skepticism in the colloquial sense, which tends to be pessimistic (even "nihilistic") about the possibility of knowledge. But it is worth noting that none of the commentators I have cited (at least those after Danto, who thinks Nietzsche denies the possibility of knowledge) attributes a skepticism to Nietzsche, and that most have in fact been at pains to exonerate Nietzsche from the charge of "skepticism" (in the colloquial sense).
9. I have argued for various aspects of this reading elsewhere. See, e.g., Berry (2004b), "The Pyrrhonian Revival in Montaigne and Nietzsche," and "Skepticism in Nietzsche's Earliest Work: Another Look at 'On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense,'" *International Studies in Philosophy* (Summer 2006).
10. It should be noted here that for Pyrrhonists, 'dogmatism' is an important term of art referring simply to those who hold beliefs (*dogmata*). While commentators have certainly not failed to connect Nietzsche's perspectivism to his many attacks on dogmatism, few have employed the term 'dogmatism' in anything other than a colloquial sense. Clark is a notable exception, since she takes Nietzsche to be using 'dogmatism' "as Kant did, for the belief that pure reason can know things-in-themselves" (1990: 202). But Hales and Welshon employ the term more in a way more typical in these discussions; they claim that the aim of perspectivism is to attack dogmatism, but they characterize this aim as entirely *rhetorical*, and not philosophical (2000: 17).
11. I do not mean to suggest here that commentators have completely neglected the epistemological import of perspectivism. Nehamas includes an account of "perspectival knowing" in his discussion that I think must be correct, at least in broad outline: "Knowledge, in contrast to 'knowledge', involves for Nietzsche an inherently conditional relation to its object, a relation that presupposes or manifests specific values, interests, and goals" (1985: 50). Clark even comes close to suggesting, as I have, that the significance of perspectivism is exhausted by its epistemological implications when she says that, "[it] *amounts to* the claim that we cannot and need not justify our beliefs by paring them down to a set of unquestionable beliefs all rational beings must share" (1990: 130, emphasis added). Construed in this way, 'perspectivism' is a "rejection of Cartesian foundationalism" (ibid.). But as it turns out, this anti-foundationalist position is *not* all perspectivism

amounts to, since Clark says, "I believe it also invites us to recognize as incoherent the very idea of things-in-themselves" (1990: 132). Similarly for Nehamas: though he thinks that to refer to knowledge as 'perspectival' is primarily to emphasize its (necessary) selectivity, he nevertheless believes that we "*must* . . . try to connect the falsification of which Nietzsche so often writes with the simplification which almost as often accompanies it in his texts (*BGE* 24, 229)" (1985: 50). I single out these readings as emblematic of an important interpretive trend: though many commentators discuss the epistemological ramifications of perspectivism, almost all of them claim that it must be doing more. This is precisely the intuition I want to block. Notable exceptions are Anderson (1998) and Leiter (2002), mentioned above, as well as Bernard Reginster (2000), who interprets perspectivism as a type of deflationism about justification; more precisely, that "there is no coherent notion of justification other than ratification in the terms provided by one's perspective" (2000: 40). This position he distinguishes, however, from skepticism, which he understands in the colloquial sense.

12. Citations from the *Genealogy* will be quoted from the Clark and Swensen translation; citations from other of Nietzsche's works will be quoted from the Kaufmann translations. All works will be cited in the text by the relevant section and aphorism number following the standard abbreviations of their English titles: '*GM*' for *The Genealogy of Morality*; '*BGE*' for *Beyond Good and Evil*; '*GS*' for *The Gay Science*; '*HAH*' for *Human, All Too Human*; and '*A*' for *The Antichrist*.
13. For a detailed commentary on the Third Essay, its structure and its arguments in the context of the *Genealogy*, see Leiter (2002: 245–88).
14. Quotations in this section will be from *GM* 3: 12 unless otherwise noted.
15. Russell (1959: 160).
16. Nietzsche makes a similar point elsewhere—that the elimination of the self in the service of objectivity, even if it were possible, would not be desirable. In a lengthy and relentless attack (*BGE* 207), Nietzsche appropriates for his own critical purposes the very notion of "selflessness" that his philosophical predecessors (and successors, as Russell shows) idealize.
17. The analysis of Nietzsche's visual metaphor for perspectivism is fairly straightforward, I think, though it should be noted that this particular formulation owes much to existing discussions. Almost everyone who has written on perspectivism in recent years has recognized the importance of *GM* 3: 12 for developing an account of Nietzsche's epistemological views and has accordingly devoted serious attention to the metaphor. See, e.g., Clark (1990: 129–30), Leiter (1994: 344), and Anderson (1998: 2). Bernd Magnus suggests that, "Perspectivism derives some of its intuitive force from the emerging popularity of the still-picture camera in Nietzsche's time and can be understood as a generalization of its point." This image illustrates "Nietzsche's claim that knowing, like seeing and representing, is always from some point of view or other" (Magnus 1988: 152–53).
18. Leiter refers to this as the "plurality claim" of perspectivism: "The more perspectives we enjoy—for example, the more angles we see the object from—the better our conception of what the object is actually like will be," or "the more we will know about its actual nature." In the cognitive case, of course, what is relevant is the number of "interests we employ in knowing the object" (1994: 344–45).
19. This consequence, also obvious enough, has likewise been noted in the literature. Leiter calls this the "infinity claim" of perspectivism: "We will never exhaust all possible perspectives on the object of vision" (or of knowledge). "Thus," he says, "we will never . . . have a final and complete view of the object's actual . . . nature" (1994: 344–45). Recognizing this same point, Clark says there is "an important sense in which our capacity for truth is limited, namely, that there are always more truths than any human being can know. We are, after all, finite creatures with a limited amount of time to discover truths" (1990: 135). However, she says in the same passage, "[t]hat there are many truths I do not know gives me no reason to doubt the truth or reliability of any of my present beliefs" (ibid.). I hope to demonstrate the falsity of this claim in what follows.
20. Or more accurately, an ontological version of it, as Hankinson (1995: 157) proposes: rather than a principle about propositions, the ontological version of the principle of non-contradiction would simply say that an *X* cannot have the property *F* and *not-F*, or perhaps *F* and $F^*$ in the same way at the same time.
21. Diogenes's *Lives* was the subject of Nietzsche's doctoral work, and he produced three articles addressing the 'source' question—an investigation of which and how many sources Diogenes drew

upon in completing his ten-volume enterprise. Nietzsche labored particularly hard, it seems, on Book IX, some of the longest sections of which are devoted to accounts of the lives of Pyrrho and his student Timon. In addition, Book IX contains the brief intellectual biographies of other Nietzschean "favorites"—Heraclitus, the atomists Leucippus and Democritus—as well as members of the Eleatic School and also Protagoras. One of the articles Nietzsche wrote during this time concentrates on Book IX in particular; in it Nietzsche argues that the sources for Diogenes's account of the lives of the Pyrrhonians must have been different from the remaining volumes of this doxographical work. To substantiate such a thesis, Nietzsche would have to have been intimately familiar not only with Diogenes's report of Pyrrhonism and its central figures, but with other extant accounts of it as well. See Barnes (1986).

22. This translation is by Annas and Barnes (1985: 100); in the remainder of this section, quotations from Diogenes will be abbreviated *DL* and will be from Annas and Barnes unless otherwise noted.
23. "Seventh is the mode depending on distances, kinds of position, places and occupants of places" (*DL* 9: 85; Annas and Barnes [1985: 100]).
24. References to Sextus's *Outlines of Pyrrhonism* (trans. Annas and Barnes) will be abbreviated *PH* for the Greek *Purrhoneioi Hupotuposeis.*
25. Here, Annas and Barnes insert a helpful comment: "Lyngurion is a kind of amber, so-called from the belief that it was formed from the congealed urine of the lynx" (1985: 103).
26. The reference to the "appearance" of sound reminds us that the Pyrrhonists mean more than just visual perception; even an argument can "appear" valid to a skeptic.
27. Thus, Sextus's opening comment, "The fifth argument is the one depending on positions and intervals and places—*for depending on each of these the same objects appear different*" (*PH* 1: 118, emphasis added).
28. Cf. the discussion of the fifth mode in Annas and Barnes (1985), in which they consider in more detail the answers that could be made on the skeptic's behalf.
29. This is an error Nietzsche illustrates with Plato's metaphysical theory of the nature of the soul and its relationship to the Good, which Nietzsche calls "a dogmatist's error" (*BGE*: P).
30. Poellner makes a similar point that may help distinguish these two types of claims. According to him, metaphysical explanations, e.g., about "why the contents of experience are the way they are," should not be confused or "mistakenly assimilated to explanations in everyday and in scientific contexts. In the latter we have fairly clear and broadly agreed criteria for what makes explanation A 'better' than explanation B (in science, explanatory virtue is very closely linked to predictive success). In metaphysics we have no such criteria. Assuming for the moment that there are sophisticated versions of physicalist realism, idealism, panpsychism, or theist creationism which are internally coherent, there simply is no procedure agreed upon among competent inquirers for determining what would make any one of these metaphysical 'explanations' better than another" (2001: 117). Strangely, Poellner nevertheless denies that Nietzsche's position ends in skepticism.
31. Sextus's presentation of Academic skepticism has long been recognized as something of a caricature. There are a number of ancient sources who claim the Academics say nothing of the sort. See, for instance, Hankinson (1995: 75–78, 85–86). His own doxographical inaccuracy (or perhaps his lack of charity) aside, however, Sextus's observation about the similarities between the dogmatists and the Academic skeptics as he sees them does say something important about the nature of the claim that nothing can be known. Among other things, it has the same stifling effect on future inquiry as any of the dogmatists' claims.
32. See *PH* 1: 13: "When we say that Skeptics do not hold beliefs, we do not take 'belief' in the sense in which some say, quite generally, that belief is acquiescing in something; for Skeptics assent to the feelings forced upon them by appearances. . . . Rather, we say that they do not hold beliefs in the sense in which some say that belief is assent to some unclear object of investigation in the sciences; for Pyrrhonists do not assent to anything unclear."
33. One-half of the well-known Meno's paradox trades on this intuition; as Socrates says, "He cannot search for what he knows—since he knows it, there is no need to search" (*Meno* 80e). Compare Nietzsche's short aphorism *BGE* 80: "A matter that has become clear to us ceases to concern us."
34. Likewise, one of the other names under which Skeptics are known, 'Zetetics', derives from *zêtein* ('to search'). Compare Nietzsche's comments about intellectual experimentation and continuous

seeking (as a way of avoiding conviction) at *GS* 151, and see *BGE* 210, where he calls for "experimenters." He does the same at *GS* 319.

35. Danto (1965: 72)
36. At least, it was so in Nietzsche's time, when philology as we know it was still struggling to define its tasks and clarify its role in the academy. Porter (2000) believes that "the tendency to skepticism (or "Pyrrhonism")—broadly speaking, a hermeneutics of suspicion—was more or less a fixed feature of classical philology from its inception. Evaluation (*krisis*), the highest critical art recognized by the Alexandrians in the age of Callimachus, after all involved the capacity to distinguish spurious from authentic texts. Still, methodological skepticism took on a new symbolic value from the eighteenth century onward, as classical philology strove to wrest for itself the status of a full-fledged science (*Wissenschaft*) amid the emerging and competing academic disciplines in Germany" (2000: 38). On the competing traditions in nineteenth-century German philology, see also James Whitman (1986).
37. This skeptical trope is so pervasive, in fact, that in his study of the Greek skeptics Hankinson even coins a special Dickensian term for it, calling it the skeptic's 'Micawber Policy'. And, he says, "far from being a desperate expedient to preserve an authentically Sceptical stance in the face of overwhelming evidence (as some think), there is actually much to be said for it. After all, until 1543 (and in fact considerably thereafter) the vast preponderance of evidence suggested that the earth was stationary" (Hankinson 1995: 30). See also Sextus Empiricus's introductory remarks on the Ten Modes: "In another sense we sometimes oppose present things to present things . . . and sometimes present to past or future things. For example, when someone propounds to us an argument we cannot refute, we say to him: 'Before the founder of the school to which you adhere was born, the argument of the school, which is no doubt sound, was not yet apparent, although it was really there in nature. In the same way, it is possible that the argument opposing the one you have just propounded is really there in nature but is not yet apparent to us; so we should not yet assent to what is now thought to be a powerful argument'" (*PH* 1: 33–34). Sextus's comment about such arguments being "really there in nature" is a good example of his occasional infelicity with his own technical vocabulary; we notice Nietzsche doing the same thing at times.
38. By this metaphor, I believe Nietzsche means to emphasize the similarity between the *act* of interpreting texts and the *act* of interpreting, say, observational or scientific data and *not* (as has been proposed, most notably by Nehamas) to propose a similarity between *the world* and *a text*.
39. According to Sextus Empiricus, "Suspension of judgment (*epochē*) gets its name from the fact that the intellect is suspended (*epexetai*) so as neither to posit nor reject anything because of the equipollence of the matters being investigated" (*PH* 1: 196). Skeptics referred to themselves, also, as *aphektikoi*.
40. In this passage and others, Nietzsche singles out the refusal to engage in doubt of any kind as a hallmark of Christianity's lack of "*intellectual* well-constitutedness." For the Christian, he says, "(e)ven to doubt is a sin" (*A* 52). And at *GS* 319 he declares that, "Our sort of honesty has been alien to all founders of religion and their kind: They have never made their experiences a matter of conscience for knowledge," that is, by questioning those experiences. "But we," on the other hand, "we others who thirst after reason, are determined to scrutinize our experiences as severely as a scientific experiment—hour after hour, day after day." In this passage too, Nietzsche indicates that intellectual honesty has to do with scrutiny and the willingness to entertain doubts.
41. Hankinson (1995: 8); see also the fuller discussion of skepticism in the medical schools on pages 225–36.
42. "Arguments, like purgative drugs which evacuate themselves along with the matters present in the body, can actually cancel themselves along with the other arguments which are said to be probative" (*PH* 2: 188). Sextus employs this simile as an illustration of the Pyrrhonists' answer to the charge of self-refutation: the Pyrrhonists, rather than denying that their arguments were self-undermining, embraced the charge! See also *PH* 1: 206 for the same simile applied to the standard skeptical phrases (e.g., *ou mallon*, or "no more this than that").
43. Mark McPherran puts the point succinctly: "'Happiness' was the generic aim of every self-respecting philosophical system of the day" (1990: 136).
44. The word is formed from an alpha privative (which operates just like the English prefix 'un-') and the verb *tarattein*, 'to trouble'. The claim that all the major Hellenistic schools did in fact accept

'tranquility' as the ultimate good is not beyond dispute. The extent to which they did so is challenged, for instance, by Gisela Striker (1990).

45. See in particular Sextus's discussions of ethics, the branch of philosophy "which is thought to deal with the distinction among fine, bad and indifferent things" (*PH* 3: 168 ff.). Sextus indulges in a lengthy digression on examples of cultural relativism to illustrate dogmatic dispute concerning the good: "For that nothing is by nature good or bad or indifferent some deduce as follows . . . ," he says at the beginning (*PH* 3: 178). (Nietzsche's *GS* 43, "*What laws betray*," has a similar feel, as Nietzsche discusses laws of the eighteenth-century Muslim sect of the Wahhabis, some customs of the Romans, and how these appear to contemporary European sensibilities.) Maintaining his skeptical stance, however, Sextus himself does not endorse this conclusion, but rather a weaker (conditional) one that connects up with a further argument about the effects of holding beliefs (*dogma*): "if what produces bad is bad and to be avoided, and if confidence that these things are by nature good and those bad produces troubles, then *to hypothesize and be convinced* that anything is bad or good *in its nature* is a bad thing and to be avoided" (*PH* 3: 238). The line of reasoning behind this argument will be more clearly illuminated in what follows.
46. We might consider as an analog Nietzsche's diagnosis that, "'Knowledge for its own sake' . . . is the last snare of morality: with that one becomes completely entangled in it once more" (*BGE* 64). Someone for whom knowledge is desirable *for its own sake* is someone who has adopted a value-hierarchy that ranks knowledge (or 'certainty', or 'objectivity') near the very top. As we have seen, this is the *modus operandi* of the ascetic intellectual and his peculiar "mode of valuation," and for Nietzsche it is symptomatic of its own kind of "sickness."
47. Cf. Nietzsche's "warning" at *BGE* 25: "Take care, philosophers and friends of knowledge, and beware of martyrdom! Of suffering 'for the truth's sake'! Even of defending yourselves! It spoils all the innocence and fine neutrality of your conscience; it makes you headstrong against objections and red rags; it stupefies, animalizes, and brutalizes when in the struggle with danger, slander, suspicion, expulsion, and even worse consequences of hostility, you have to pose as protectors of truth upon the earth—as though 'the truth' were such an innocuous and incompetent creature as to require protectors! . . . After all, . . . you know well enough that it cannot be of any consequence if *you* of all people are proved right; you know that no philosopher so far has been proved right, and that there might be a more laudable truthfulness in every little question mark that you place after your special words and favorite doctrines (and occasionally after yourselves) than in all the solemn gestures and trumps before accusers and law courts." Note that Nietzsche's remark that "no philosopher so far has been proved right" looks very much like the skeptics' constant refrain that all philosophical issues remain undecided.
48. Using one of Sextus's own examples, this illustration is put to good use by Mark McPherran (1990: 146) in his essay "*Ataraxia* and *Eudaimonia* in Ancient Pyrrhonism: Is the Skeptic Really Happy?"
49. On the face of it, this looks like a clear violation of skeptical hygiene. But as Sextus tries to make clear, the skeptic is not committed to their being any *necessary* connection between their practice (*epochē*) and its result (*ataraxia*); the Pyrrhonists are skeptics about causality, too. The skeptic simply diagnoses what seem to him to be the illnesses of dogmatism and reports on what has been successful, in his experience, in avoiding such conditions. Crucially, then, the skeptics simply purport to *aim* at *ataraxia*—they are not advancing a *claim* about what humans must or by nature do pursue. My thanks to Richard Bett for helping me clarify this point. But cf. Hankinson (1997) for a slightly different take on the issue.
50. McPherran (1990: 136)
51. Thus Sextus identifies "the hope of becoming tranquil" as the "causal principle of skepticism" (*PH* 1: 12). Sextus's causal language can sometimes be misleading; here he simply means that originally, skeptics were motivated (caused) to begin their investigations for the same reasons as dogmatists.
52. I explore this issue at some length and offer a reply to this objection in Berry (2004a).
53. See, e.g., *BGE* 12, 230; *HAH* 37; *GS* 110, 151; and *A* 23.
54. On a similar note, see *A* 54.
55. *BGE* 43, 44; and for a view of the opposite "type," see the above note on the 'metaphysical need' and weakness.

56. See, e.g., *BGE* 41, in which Nietzsche urges, "Not to remain stuck to a person. . . . Not to remain stuck to a fatherland. . . . Not to remain stuck to some pity. . . . Not to remain stuck to a science. . . . Not to remain stuck to one's own detachment." Also *BGE* 43, 44, 64, 80, 207 (all discussed above).

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