NIETZSCHE AND THE PERSPECTIVE OF LIFE

Charlie Huenemann

Utah State University

Nietzsche clearly had problems with moralizers. He believed that those who advocate one lifestyle over another are doing nothing more than revealing their own psychological pathologies:

> Finally, let's consider how naïve it is in general to say, "Human beings *should* be such and such!" Reality shows us a captivating treasury of types, the exuberance of an evanescent play and alteration of forms. And some pathetic bystander of a moralist says to all this, "No! Human beings should be *different*"? … He even *knows* how human beings should be, this sanctimonious sniveler; he paints himself on the wall and pronounces, "*ecce homo*!"…(TI 5, 6)[i]

From passages such as this one, we might well conclude that Nietzsche was an anti-realist about moral values: values are relativized to individuals, or to certain perspectives, and nothing is morally valuable in and of itself.[ii] Support for this conclusion can also be found in Nietzsche's numerous remarks about values being inherent in a perspective, or about a perspective being nothing more than a certain structure of values.

But at the same time, of course, Nietzsche's philosophy is rife with valuations. He argues that the history of western civilization is the history of a sick and slavish morality, and he claims that his supreme project is a "revaluation" of all values -- not a rejection or denial of all values. One might initially suppose that Nietzsche only intends to express his own values, or his own perspective. But it is hard to believe that he meant his moral critiques only as statements of his own opinion, with which others could respectably and legitimately disagree.[iii] Many of his trenchant criticisms strongly suggest that he believed his own valuations had a special grounding the others lacked. But what could this grounding be?

The passage quoted above continues with a suggested answer:

> Morality, insofar as it *condemns* on its own grounds, and *not* from the point of view of life's perspectives and objectives, is a specific error for which one should have no sympathy….

The suggestion is that a morality which condemns "from the point of view of life's perspectives and objectives" is not an error, and so presents a legitimate set of values. But what can it mean to value from the perspectives and objectives of life? How can "life" have a perspective? And how can Nietzsche privilege life's perspective without becoming some "pathetic bystander of a moralist" himself?

In this paper, with the aim of explaining Nietzsche's view, I shall illustrate one way of making sense of a theoretical entity (called "Life"), which has values and a perspective. Then I will turn to Nietzsche's perspectivism, with the hope of explaining

why Life's perspective should be in any way privileged. Finally, I will explain how trying to live from Life's perspective would force us to change our values – and, in particular, disown the values we have placed in truth (at least for its own sake) and traditional morality.

I. "LIFE," THE THEORETICAL ENTITY

Without worrying just now about the legitimacy of such an entity, let us see what sort of features a theoretical entity called "Life" must have in order to have a perspective and do the philosophical work Nietzsche requires of it.

We will begin with the question of what it is to be a perspective-bearing entity. Broadly, we can identify two necessary features which are jointly sufficient for having a perspective. First, an entity must be capable of placing an *interpretation* on experience. This need not require that the entity be conscious, but it does require that at least some of the entity's behavior be best explained by adopting a low-level intentional stance toward it. In other words, the entity's behavior must be best understood and explained (at least sometimes) on the basis of how it *represents* the environment to itself. This will clearly exclude all simple inanimate objects, but arguably will include any entity that is sensitively attuned to changes in its environment, such as corn plants, wasps, and some robots. Second, the entity must have *interests*, or preferred outcomes in its experience. These interests are revealed by dispositions to behavior: specifically, an entity with interests tends to behave so as to bring about a particular outcome, and strives to bring about that outcome in different ways, depending on the circumstance.[iv] In short, the entity can be usefully regarded as "striving" toward certain outcomes. Any entity with a

perspective both interprets and has interests, and any entity which both interprets and has interests has a perspective. We should further note (since it will become important shortly) that all living things have a perspective, on this understanding, since living things must interpret their environments and have interests in order to sustain themselves as living things. (Some complex things usually regarded as nonliving – such as chess programs and national economies – may also count as having perspectives, depending on further specifications of the details of "interpreting" and "having interests." We need not take up that task here.)

Now let us postulate an entity, "Life," which behaves in the following ways. (1) It classifies every other entity in the world as either perspective-bearing or non-perspective-bearing. (2) It ignores all non-perspective-bearing entities. (3) Among all the perspective-bearing entities, it classifies their interests as either (a) likely to bring about an increase in the strength or number of perspective-bearing entities, or (b) unlikely to do so. And (4) it strives to promote interests in the (a) category. So, to put the proposal in simpler terms: Life strives to promote entities with perspectives, as well as the particular interests which promote entities with perspectives. Clearly, on this proposal, Life both interprets and has interests, and so, on our understanding, it has a perspective.

Life, so described, might sound like an implausible theoretical entity, but in fact something like it was proposed by mid-19th-century biologists whom Nietzsche read and studied with some enthusiasm. Moore (2002) cites Ernst Haekel, Wilhelm Roux, and William Rolph as all promoting a kind of *hylozoism*, which maintained that living things are driven by an internal force or striving toward life and power. This force had no goal other than the promulgation of life. Such an internal force was believed to be a necessary

supplement to Darwinian evolution, since it was difficult to see in the 19th century how else to explain the "drive toward life" that seemed manifest in organisms. Living things, it was believed, are not merely mechanical in nature, but have strong preferences, and strive even at the most basic level to express those preferences.

We can now turn to the philosophical work Life is supposed to do in Nietzsche's adjudication of moral values. This can be explained quite straightforwardly. Nietzsche's set of values are aimed at promoting Life's interests, but the great majority of human moral systems, he argues, have been and are antithetical to Life:

> All naturalism in morality, that is, all *healthy* morality, is ruled by an instinct of life …. *Anti-natural* morality, that is, almost every morality that has been taught, honored, and preached up to now, instead turns precisely *against* the instincts of life – it is a sometimes hidden, sometimes loud and bold condemnation of these instincts. (TI 5, 4)

On our interpretation, this is just to say that the interests promoted by traditional morality tend not to promote the numbers and strength of perspective-bearing entities. Nietzsche's own set of values will promote them, and that, he believes, is what makes his values *healthy* (or in other words, "Life-advancing").

The interests of Life would be shared by all healthy living things, since all living things, as we noted, are perspective-bearing entities, and Life strives to promote them and their strength. But it is also theoretically possible (and, as Nietzsche would say, "all too human") for a living thing to condemn Life's interests, and turn against its own interests

as a living thing. A living thing may simply make a wrong judgment about what really is Life-advancing. Or a living being might become "infected" by an alien drive which is driven to promote its own flourishing, even at the expense of the host organism (think, for example, of alcoholism). Or an organism might be placed in a context in which a normally healthy, Life-advancing drive might lead to values and behavior that are antithetical to Life. For example, imagine someone with a healthy drive to express their own power and gain the esteem of others. When this person is schooled within an ascetic, Christian society, then he comes to believe that he can satisfy that drive only by turning ambition against itself, outdoing everyone else in chastity, humility, and poverty. His impotence actually becomes a demonstration of his power. He may win the esteem of others. But as a result, in the lifestyle he has adopted, he has turned against his own interests as a living thing. The decision made by such a person, Nietzsche writes, "is just one of life's value judgments," made by a "declining, weakened, tired, and condemned life" (TI 5, 5). This is a case of which, as we saw earlier, Nietzsche would say that "Morality, insofar as it *condemns* on its own grounds, and *not* from the point of view of [L]ife's perspectives and objectives, is a specific error for which one should have no sympathy…" (TI 5, 6).

II. The privilege of Life's perspective

So we can make sense of "Life's perspectives and objectives." But at the same time, Nietzsche himself would insist that there are many other possible perspectives. Christianity is a perspective, as is Aristotelianism and utilitarianism and Kantianism.

Why should Life's perspective have any greater moral authority than any other perspective?

We have just seen one possible reply. All living things share Life's perspective, just in virtue of being living things. *Before* being moral, we might say, we need to satisfy Life's concerns; for otherwise we are dead and questions about what we should or should not do are moot. So Life's perspective is privileged because it is at a foundational level of who we are.

But this reply should not satisfy us for two reasons. First, who is to say that we should understand ourselves as fundamentally organic beings? At least some Christians and the Kantians think otherwise, of course, and they see our moral natures as rooted in something beyond nature. So why assume Nietzsche's more naturalistic account of human nature? And, second, even if we are organic beings, why should the objectives of our organic nature take precedence over our objectives as moral beings? That is to say, why shouldn't moral aims – whatever their source -- take precedence over what Life urges us to do? Just as Nietzsche condemns traditional morality as being anti-natural, others would praise morality for allowing us to rise above nature's dictates.

These questions force us to take a deeper look at Nietzsche's perspectivism, and whether it is possible for any perspective to be privileged. According to Clark (1990), Nietzsche's perspectivism should be seen as a consequence of his rejection of metaphysical realism. A metaphysical realist maintains that there exist things independently of any human knowledge, any possible human knowledge, and even any possible human concerns. That is to say, according to metaphysical realism, there could exist a theory which meets all of our cognitive interests (such as empirical testability,

explanatory power, predictive success, comprehensiveness, and simplicity) but is still *false* in some way which we could never discover, and which could never matter to us, even in principle. Kant was such a realist, maintaining that even a maximally perfect scientific theory of the phenomenal world would not provide us with an adequate account of things in themselves. Clark argues that Nietzsche was such a metaphysical realist early on, around the time of "On Truth and Lie in the Extra-Moral Sense," in which he claimed that what we call "truth" is only "a movable host of metaphors, …. illusions we have forgotten are illusions" (Clark 1990: 65). Such epistemic pessimism can make sense only against a backdrop of metaphysical realism.

But Nietzsche gradually grew skeptical of the notion of the thing it itself and came to regard it as a human fiction. For a brief period, according to Clark, he inconsistently maintained that there is *no* thing in itself, and our knowledge of *it* is skewed by psychological prejudices. Finally he landed in perspectivism. According to perspectivism, human beings are capable of constructing many different mutually-incompatible theories, and are incapable of attaining or constructing any single objective, neutral theory which either accommodates or rules out all of the other possible theories. Nietzsche does not carefully explain exactly what perspectives are, or what structure they have, or how many there might be. But from what he does say, we can suspect that each perspective offers its own ontology, its own laws or forces, and its own valuations. In other words, each perspective tells a story about what exists, what makes it change, and which states are better or more valuable than others.

Schematically, a perspective may be said to have the following form:

$$P_n = \{O_n, L_n, V_n\}$$

where "O" is perspective n's ontology, "L" is its laws, and "V" is its values. Each perspective focuses on and ignores different sets of things; each sees different kinds of forces animating the universe; and each has its own view of what *should* happen, or what should be avoided. But perspectives need not be incommensurable. They may overlap to varying degrees, and it will often be possible to compare perspectives, especially when they share the same values. Ptolemaic and Copernican astronomers both valued predictive accuracy, for example, and several generations weighed the advantages of each system for delivering what they valued.

Nietzsche's radical point, however, is that there is *no* perspective which gets the ontology, laws, and values essentially *right*. The very notion makes no sense, according to Nietzsche, since all knowing is knowing from some perspective or other: "There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival 'knowing'" (GM 3:12). All we can ever do is work within perspectives, shifting and adjusting our beliefs and attitudes as "better" candidates come along, given the values which belong already to the perspectives we now inhabit. (This is essentially the point Quine frequently made through his use of Neurath's boat analogy.[v]) We can try to ask questions about what in the world is causally responsible for making one perspective better than another, or one theory better than another; but the only answers we can supply will be in terms of the ontology and laws of some particular perspective or other. We cannot really conceive of our situation being otherwise, according to Nietzsche, since we have no genuine concept of nonperspectival knowing:

> [L]et us guard ourselves against the tentacles of such contradictory concepts as "pure reason," "absolute spirituality," "knowledge in itself": here it is always demanded that we think an eye that cannot possibly be thought, an eye that must not have any direction, in which the active and interpretive forces through which seeing first becomes seeing-something are to be shut off, are to be absent; thus, what is demanded here is always an absurdity and non-concept of an eye. (GM 3:12)

Knowing, Nietzsche claims, requires perspective; we have no concept of what it would be to know without actively interpreting, filtering, and valuing. Once we recognize this, the notion of a "thing in itself" falls away as an empty, impossible fiction.

Still, by comparing different perspectives, we can argue meaningfully over the merits of Copernicus and Ptolemy, Protestantism and Catholicism, Schopenhauerianism and Kantianism, and so on, given the values shared by the occupants of each relevant perspective. Call these "in house" disputes, since they are disputes about the best perspective to adopt, given shared values. But we can also adopt a broader perspective and inquire into the values that are *not* shared. So (for a minor example) we can ask whether accurate prediction, a valued shared by both the heliocentrist and the geocentrist, is as valuable to us as the value of believing in the literal truth of some passages in the Bible. Or (for a more significant example) we can ask about the different assessments of the nobility of human life implied by the philosophies of Schopenhauer and Kant, as opposed to that of the Homeric Greeks. When we try to assess these different values, we

adopt a higher perspective, or a meta-perspective, and try to weigh perspectives against one another with respect to the values they advocate.

We can do this, however, only by adopting some further value. To see this more formally, we are now taking perspectives themselves as our domain; and we are asking which set of values inherent to these perspectives best meets some further, *special* value. Schematically, we now have something like this --

$$V_s\,(P_n, P_{n+1}, P_{n+2}, \ldots) = P_?$$

where "V_s" is this further, special value, "P_n" and the others are various competing perspectives, and "$P_?$" is the "winner," or the perspective which V_s selects as the one which best promotes it. We are carrying out a *valuation of values* inherent in various perspectives, determining to what extent each perspective's values promotes our "special" value. This, of course, is the project Nietzsche began toward the end of his productive career.

To get a better feel for these special values, let us recall the sorts of large-scale values and perspectives Nietzsche actually saw as the principal contenders. We can identify "$V_{\text{CHRISTIANITY}}$" (or the values of Christianity), "V_{TRUTH}" (or the values of truth), and "V_{LIFE}" (or the values of Life). The first two special values, Nietzsche claims, are the ones that have weighed most heavily in the long history of our culture's valuation of values; the third is one Nietzsche proposes as a new standard. In his genealogical account of morality, Nietzsche argues that for an excessively long time, the values of Christianity have reigned supreme, and they have been the criteria by which humans have decided to

privilege one perspective over another (in particular, an ascetic perspective was privileged over all others). Over time, he goes on to argue, the asceticism of Christianity evolved into the asceticism of truth, or the scientism of Nietzsche's day. But this has ended in value bankruptcy, according to Nietzsche: the dispassionate valuing of truth above all else reveals that no state of the world is inherently more valuable than any other, and thus no perspective is inherently more valuable than any other. This culminates in the problem of *nihilism*. In its wake, Nietzsche, through his philosophy, proposed a new special value, or a revaluation of all values: "V_{LIFE}," or the values of Life, which promises to give us a different rank ordering of perspectives, on the basis of how Life-affirming each perspective is.

But where are these "special" values supposed come from? It is tempting to claim that they lie buried within us, within our nature. But this is exactly the sort of move Nietzsche would suspect as being disingenuous, prompted by wishful thinking, and a possible feint toward some spiritual thing in itself. Given his perspectivism, Nietzsche cannot plausibly maintain that his special values are somehow deeper or fundamental to our natures or to the nature of reality. What he can propose, however, is that they are *legislated*, that is to say proposed, by philosophers, either knowingly or unknowingly. Nietzsche believed that, historically, all values have been super-added to the world, or placed upon our experience by human beings: "Whatever has *value* in the present world has it not in itself, according to its nature – nature is always value-less – but rather has been given, granted value, and *we* were the givers and granters!" (GS 301). This is simply a consequence of values being embedded in perspectives, which are constructed and placed upon experience by human beings. What is new, Nietzsche thinks, is that, with the

advance of the higher types of human beings whom Nietzsche thinks are up and coming, values will be consciously and deliberately placed upon experience. Here is the "fundamental thought," as he records it in a note from 1885:

> [T]he new values must first be created – we shall not be *spared* this task! For us the philosopher must be a legislator. New types. (How the highest types hitherto [e.g., Greeks] were reared: to will this type of "chance" consciously.) (WP 979)

This is the positive task of Nietzsche's revaluation of values. The negative task is revealing the unhealthy psychological motivations behind traditional values. The positive task is putting something new in their place, while at the same time knowing that we are not discovering value so much as legislating or proposing it.

The new legislations of value, however, are not entirely arbitrary. While there is nothing to stop a higher individual from proposing (say) a shallow hedonistic pursuit of pleasure as a new supreme value, Nietzsche supposes that these higher individuals will recognize the utility and explanatory power of Nietzschean psychology, and this psychology will predict that valuing shallow pleasures will lead by short route once again (like Christianity) to nihilism, despair, and suicide. Nietzsche's own project is to self-consciously propose a new value, designed specifically to stave off nihilism. The new value is grounded in his own peculiar ontology, which views nature as composed of various drives, and is bound by his own peculiar natural force, which is the will to power.

Thus Nietzsche cannot do more than propose a further perspective to compete with existing perspectives. But he can muster a pragmatic argument in favor of his

perspective. While he cannot demonstrate that V_{LIFE} is in some sense the ultimate or objective special value, he can argue that the other available special values lead to severe problems, and that his special value provides an escape from them. In effect, Nietzsche can say to us: "Be honest -- do you not *in fact* value Life? And do you not recognize how $V_{CHRISTIANITY}$ leads to V_{TRUTH}, and V_{TRUTH} to nihilism? Do you not in fact wish to avoid nihilism? Do you have anything better to propose? If so, let us by all means hear it!" In making this reply, Nietzsche would be bound by the basic truth of perspectivism: that there is no supreme court of appeal, and it is up to us, within our perspectives, to select the values which seem to press most forcefully upon us. His wager is that, as living beings, Life's values will in fact press upon us most strongly, especially if we are convinced that the other alternatives result in nihilism.

The perspective-bound nature of Nietzsche's proposal is demonstrated when, in *Twilight of the Idols*, he acknowledges that, "for us" – presumably his devoted readers, who are on board with his project – we really have no means to demonstrate that the value of Life is objectively superior to all other values:

> One would have to occupy a position *outside* life, and on the other hand to know it as well as one, as many, as all who have lived it, in order to be allowed even to touch upon the problem of the *value* of life: these are reasons enough to grasp that, for us, this problem is an inaccessible problem. When we speak of values, we speak under the inspiration, under the optics of life: life itself is forcing us to posit values, life itself is valuing by means of us, *when* we posit values … (TI 5, 5)

His claim here is that when we adopt Nietzsche's perspective, we take our values to be the values of Life ("life itself is valuing by means of us"); in other words, the will to power inherent in us as living beings compels us to value things according to the perspective of Life. To not see things this way would require us to put aside Life's drive – essentially, to consider the world from the perspective of nonliving beings – and adopt a different perspective. This we cannot do. So, for us, the problem of revaluing the values of Life is "inaccessible." But this argument of course presumes the ontology of Nietzsche's own perspective, which a Christian or Kantian will not share. Perhaps, according to Nietzsche, they will consider sharing it, once they see that they have been backed into nihilism. Either that, or they will have to embrace nihilism, and take seriously the consequence that life is utterly of no significance.

It is precisely from this partisan perspective that Nietzsche criticizes the "sanctimonious snivelers" who paint themselves on the wall and pronounce, "*Ecce homo*!" The so-called snivelers have not realized that their own unhealthy psychologies are driving them to produce these moral pronouncements. Typically, they are trying unsuccessfully to get some approximation of Christian virtues on the basis of some ontology and set of laws which in fact can result only in nihilism. Their hope is only wishful thinking, driven by psychological pathology, and they have neither the wit nor courage to face the true origin and consequences of their own perspective. The portraits they produce record only what they wish could be so, not what is so.

III. Living from Life's Perspective

Well: what makes Nietzsche so sure he is better off in this regard? His confidence in his perspective should be only as strong as the explanatory power of his psychology. If he has managed to provide a compelling account of human psychology, and if he seems right about the genealogy of morality, and about the nihilistic consequences of Christianity, then he is in an excellent position to provide an alternative set of values – at least, for anyone who does not want to embrace nihilism. On the other hand, if Nietzsche was fundamentally wrong about human psychology, or if his own mind was warped in ways his own psychology could not diagnose, then all bets would be off. Nietzsche must have recognized this as a possibility, since he wanted neither disciples nor "echoes" of his thinking, but daring and intelligent friends who would ruthlessly attack his ideas and try to out-think him.

But for the sake of argument let us suppose he was right and see where it takes us. What is the life lived from the perspective of Life? As we saw earlier, Life's interest is to promote and sustain the strength or number of perspective-bearing entities. This may translate into both individualistic attitudes and social attitudes.

As individuals, Life would prompt us to try to foster within ourselves as many healthy drives as possible. Indeed, we find such recommendations in Nietzsche's positive philosophy. As Richardson writes, Nietzsche's ultimate hero, the overman, "is that very rare person who can form a wealth of conflicting parts into a system in which they all find expression, yet also are phases in an encompassing project" (1996: 69). Richardson illustrates this with a passage from one of Nietzsche's notes, published later in the collection, *The Will to Power*:

> The highest human being would have the greatest multiplicity of drives, and in the relatively greatest strength that can be endured. Indeed, where the plant human being shows itself strong, one finds instincts that drive powerfully *against* one another (e.g. Shakespeare), but are restrained. (WP 966; Richardson 1996: 69)

"*Against* one another" in this passage indicates just how, in Nietzsche's view, drives and living beings are fostered – namely, through opposition and challenge. Nietzsche understands strength and health as resilience, or an ability to rebound from threat and injury.[vi] Shakespeare is an example of such a locus of warring drives inasmuch as he must have had a full population of wildly different characters within him. We may think of a great actor, too, who is able to assume many different characters and see life, as it were, from these many different points of view. But in any person so complicated, the drives must somehow be restrained and managed. Otherwise, warring drives will eventually consume one another, i.e., turn them toward their own end. The dynamic, complex manifold of warring drives must be stable over time, or harnessed together into a single, encompassing project.

As members of a society or community, Life would prompt us also to try to foster as many differing perspectives as possible. We find this too in Nietzsche's positive philosophy, even as early as the second book of *Human, all too Human*. Here Nietzsche makes an explicit link between interpersonal differences and intrapersonal differences:

> What is love but understanding and rejoicing at the fact that another lives, feels and acts in a way different from and opposite to ours? If love is to bridge these

> antitheses through joy it may not deny or seek to abolish them. – Even self-love presupposes an unblended duality (or multiplicity) in one person. (HH 2: 75)

This point is somewhat tamer than the points Nietzsche will make later, but the core idea is the same as Life's central interest in fostering and preserving diversity in perspectives. The romantic way of putting this is that love requires us to preserve joyfully the differences existing between the lover and the beloved. The later, unromantic, Nietzschean way of putting the point is that only by preserving or even augmenting these differences can there be the conflict and struggle which is needed in order to strengthen the Life within us.

This latter point is important to note lest Nietzsche be understood as a selfless defender of cognitive or cultural diversity. Nietzsche is certainly no advocate of gentle toleration and mutual understanding. Rather, he consistently advocates *war* among differing perspectives, perpetual challenge and attack, and ongoing contest. "It is the good war that hallows any cause," he writes (Z 1, 10). This is, again, because of his model of health and strength as resilience. Life's aim is to strengthen and multiply perspective-bearing entities, and Nietzsche believes that the straightforward way of doing this by challenging these entities with adversity, hardship, and misfortune.

So, overall, living from Life's perspective means an active encouragement of healthy, regulated complexity and conflict, both within the individual and among individuals, with the strategic aim of promoting the strength and diversity of perspective-bearing entities. There are several elements in this proposal we should find attractive. It is courageous and powerfully life-affirming. It prizes self-knowledge and, in a certain

sense, self-improvement. But adopting this grand goal on behalf of Life also means *not* placing as much stock in two values we have traditionally held: *truth*, and *morality*.

Of course, there are some truths an advocate of Life would value very highly – namely, truths about what promotes Life's values, and what really does increase the strength and health of individuals, and so on. But apart from the truths which impact Life's immediate concerns, Life is not all that interested in truth, particularly for truth's own sake. Life is concerned primarily with advancing its own agenda, and not necessarily getting an accurate picture of the world:

> The falseness of a judgement is to us not necessarily an objection to a judgement: it is here that our new language perhaps sounds strangest. The question is to what extent it is life-advancing, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-breeding…. (BGE 4)

There may be many false beliefs which are, in Nietzsche's sense, "life-advancing." Even Christianity, a perspective Nietzsche obviously loathes, can be said to have furthered Life's cause; if nothing else, it certainly provided Nietzsche himself with a worthy opponent against whom to build his own strength.

This perspective upon beliefs – assessing their life-advancing qualities rather than their truth – accounts for the distinctive air of "connoisseurship" surrounding many of Nietzsche's analyses of philosophical beliefs. Nietzsche rarely simply argues against the truth of a belief. He far more often tries to illustrate and denigrate the sort of person likely to have this sort of belief. The entire first chapter of *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example

(where the above passage is located), is a series of attacks on various philosophies and philosophers, including Plato, Epicurus, the Stoics, Descartes, Spinoza, Kant, and modern-day materialism. In each case, Nietzsche tries to illustrate how the thinking has grown out of some ugly character flaw, or some irrational fear, or – most simply – *bad taste*. He assesses the thought aesthetically, but with an aesthetics of psychic health. He considers the beliefs in terms of the strength of spirit or mind they reflect, and not by the strength of the philosophical arguments behind them. He takes down Spinoza with the remark that, by encasing and masking his philosophy in a "hocus-pocus of mathematical form," he only betrays his own "personal timidity and vulnerability" as "a sick recluse" (BGE 5). And so on. He supposes himself to have moved beyond the arena where arguments are supposed to decide whether a philosophical belief is worth having. He looks instead to the sort of life the belief comes from, or the sort of life it fits into, and endorses or rejects the belief depending on how "life-advancing" or *noble* that sort of life is.

Life also has no concern for traditional morality. To be sure, Nietzsche thinks, certain conditions have favored traditional morality, where "favored" means "rendered life-advancing." But conditions change, and when they do, what was life-advancing may become life-stunting. Of course, this is precisely why Nietzsche takes his great task to be the revaluation of all values, or the legislation of values which, given our current conditions, will further promote Life. But what values, specifically, would Life legislate?

Overall, it seems that Life encourages us to see individuals as loci of power, and to feel obligated to do what we can to deepen that power. This may often require us to act in ways we would traditionally view as cruel – since, sometimes, only cruelty will force

an individual to grow in power. One imagines confronting others and ourselves with what we fear most, just so that we can face our fears and overcome them. We would look upon fearful, timid, or weak individuals in the way that we now look down upon unrepentant wrongdoers – with scorn and disdain. We would celebrate nothing more than a really good fight. We would value kind actions only so far as these qualities betokened a surplus of power on the part of the agent, and not any sort of weak pity or sympathy. It is for good reason that Nietzsche believed that many would find his revaluation of values shocking, disturbing, and even calamitous.

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ENDNOTES

[i] References are standard abbreviations of Nietzsche's published books, followed by section number or by chapter and section number. Translations are those listed in the bibliography.

[ii] GS 301: "Whatever has *value* in our world does not have value in itself, according to its nature -- nature is always value-less, but has been *given* value at some time, as a present -- and it was *we* who gave and bestowed it."

[iii] But for a plausible defense of a view like this, see Leiter 2002: 146-61.

[iv] See Richardson's helpful discussion of the plasticity of drives (2004: 74-5).

[v] See, for example, the prefatory quote at the beginning of Quine 1960.

[vi] See Huenemann (forthcoming).