

# Nietzschean Pragmatism

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*Abstract:* Nietzschean pragmatism is the view that one should believe whatever best promotes life, even things that are untrue because they fail to correspond to reality. Nietzsche expresses this view in early sections of *Beyond Good and Evil*. While he rejects all objective value including that of truth, his view that passions can give their objects subjective value suggests valuing beliefs that promote life. The second essay of the *Untimely Meditations* applies Nietzschean pragmatism to the study of history.

*Keywords:* pragmatism, truth, value, belief, objectivity, subjectivity, James

Nietzsche holds that one should believe what best promotes life, and he also accepts the correspondence theory of truth. I'll call this conjunction of views Nietzschean pragmatism. This article provides textual evidence for attributing this pragmatist position to Nietzsche and explains how his broader metaethical views led him to it.

The following section introduces Nietzschean pragmatism, discussing how Nietzsche expresses it in *BGE*, and distinguishing it from William James's pragmatism about truth. The second section explains how Nietzsche's skepticism about values that can't be grounded in individual passion attracted him to this kind of pragmatism. The third section explores an early application of Nietzschean pragmatism to history in the second essay of *UM*. I conclude by considering how Nietzsche developed his pragmatism.

## Nietzschean Pragmatism in *Beyond Good and Evil*

Nietzschean pragmatism combines the view that one should believe what best promotes life with the correspondence theory of truth. *BGE* 1 and 4 are among Nietzsche's clearest expressions of such a view, and I'll discuss

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each of them at length here. I'll also contrast Nietzschean pragmatism with William James's pragmatism about truth, which doesn't raise the questions Nietzsche discusses in *BGE* 1 or allow for the striking claims Nietzsche makes in *BGE* 4.

*BGE* 1 raises the question that Nietzschean pragmatism will answer. Nietzsche mentions the "will to truth" in the first sentence while inquiring about how this will figures in our psychology. Then Nietzsche describes how our "long halt at the question about the cause of this will" was followed by "a complete stop before a still more basic question. We asked about the *value* of this will. Suppose we want truth: *why not rather* untruth? and uncertainty? even ignorance?" This is how "the problem of the value of truth came before us."<sup>1</sup>

Nietzsche announces his answer and solution in *BGE* 4, which begins: "The falseness of a judgment is for us not necessarily an objection to a judgment; in this respect our new language may sound strangest. The question is to what extent it is life-promoting, life-preserving, species-preserving, perhaps even species-cultivating." Here the questions whether a judgment is true and whether it's useful with regard to promoting life and cultivating the species are sharply distinguished. Nietzsche emphasizes these practical goals over truth. In some situations, making true judgments might be the best way to achieve practical goals—in particular, when we're trying to figure out which course of action will best promote life or cultivate the species. When true judgments are important for realizing these practical values, the falseness of a judgment will give us reason to reject it. But as Nietzsche notes at the beginning, truth is not always aligned with practical value in such a way.

He then provides examples of judgments that he takes to be valuable for life but false, writing that "we are fundamentally inclined to claim that the falsest judgments (which include the synthetic judgments *a priori*) are the most indispensable for us; that without accepting the fictions of logic, without measuring reality against the purely invented world of the unconditional and self-identical, without a constant falsification of the world by means of numbers, man could not live—that renouncing false judgments would mean renouncing life and a denial of life." Here he treats some of the most fundamental human judgments as life-promoting but false. While philosophers including Plato contemplate promoting their political goals by convincing people of "noble lies," these beliefs aren't as

fundamental to human thought as logic, identity, and number. In rejecting the truth of judgments invoking these concepts as well as the other judgments that Immanuel Kant lists as synthetic *a priori* (which include causal judgments), Nietzsche treats false belief as essential for human life. While one might say to Plato that the noble lies aren't actually needed, much of our activity in the simplest parts of everyday life would be impossible if everyone joined Nietzsche in rejecting logic, identity, and number. As judgments involving number, logic, and identity are necessary for achieving nearly any goal we might have, believing only the true would indeed mean renouncing life.

Why these beliefs end up being so useful despite being false would be an interesting question to ask Nietzsche. Doesn't their utility result from how they support accurate predictions of observed phenomena? And then, why isn't this predictive accuracy evidence that they correspond to a reality that causes the observations we make? Such arguments are often made by scientific realists against their instrumentalist opponents.<sup>2</sup> But as my focus is primarily interpretive, I'll set such issues aside here.

Nietzsche ends the section by recognizing how radical his view is: "To recognize untruth as a condition of life—that certainly means resisting accustomed value feelings in a dangerous way; and a philosophy that risks this would by that token alone place itself beyond good and evil" (*BGE* 4). These passages from *BGE* express a distinctively pragmatic conception of epistemic value on which the best beliefs to hold will be false ones, if true beliefs don't help as much in achieving certain practical goals. But *BGE* 1 and 4 show that Nietzsche doesn't accept a pragmatist theory of truth like that of the American pragmatist William James, who writes: "'The true,' to put it very briefly, is only the expedient in the way of our thinking, just as 'the right' is only the expedient in the way of our behaving. Expedient in almost any fashion; and expedient in the long run and on the whole, of course."<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche's pragmatism is about what one ought to believe, while James's pragmatism is about truth itself. If Nietzsche accepted James's pragmatist theory of truth, he wouldn't be able to tell us that false beliefs were useful for life. The usefulness of these beliefs would, on James's pragmatist theory of truth, make them true. Since Nietzsche is concerned to tell us that the most useful beliefs can be false ones, he cannot have this sort of pragmatist theory of truth. Maudemarie Clark also notes this point in arguing against Arthur Danto's pragmatic interpretation: "Nietzsche, in

fact, insisted repeatedly that knowledge of the truth may conflict with the satisfaction of practical interests.”<sup>4</sup>

To put the point another way, Nietzsche presents the question of why truth has value in *BGE* 1 as a serious and difficult one that brings us to a “complete stop.” If he accepted a pragmatic theory of truth as James did, the question would be easy to answer. Since James identifies the true with the useful, truth would then acquire whatever value useful things have. Combining pragmatism about epistemic value with pragmatism about truth provides a straightforward defense of the value of truth. But Nietzsche doesn’t offer such a straightforward defense, and he doesn’t think the question of why truth has value is so easily answered. This shows that Nietzsche cannot be combining his pragmatism about epistemic value with pragmatism about truth.

I follow Clark in attributing a correspondence theory of truth to Nietzsche. This is the traditional view of truth: true beliefs are those that correspond with reality. My purpose here is just to contrast the correspondence theory with the pragmatist theory of truth, so I won’t explore the finer details of what variety of correspondence theory Nietzsche held. Nietzsche’s view may also be indeterminate between the correspondence theory and deflationary views that retain many features of the correspondence theory. I won’t draw these distinctions, as the contrast between correspondence-like views and pragmatism is the important one for our purposes.

The chart below presents the results of combining correspondence and pragmatist theories of truth with truth-oriented and pragmatic theories of epistemic value:

Table. 1 | <Caption to Come>

	Truth as epistemic value	Pragmatism about epistemic value
Correspondence theory of truth	Standard view: believe the true, whether or not it’s useful	Nietzschean pragmatism: believe the useful, whether or not it’s true
Pragmatist theory of truth	James’s pragmatism (1): believe the true, which is the useful	James’s pragmatism (2): believe the useful, which is the true

“Useful” here refers to any kind of practical value, not including the intrinsic value that truth is taken to have on standard nonpragmatist views. Nietzsche and James had very different theories of value, and I use “useful” broadly to span these differences. I use “epistemic” here and throughout this article to mean “regarding belief.” I do not use it to imply any strong or direct connection to truth, as some users of the term do. So as I use the terms, being a pragmatist about epistemic value is consistent with rejecting the value of truth.

As the chart indicates, the correspondence theory of truth and pragmatism about epistemic value are the only combination where we might be right to believe useful things that fail to be true. Nietzsche tells us to do this in *BGE* 4, giving us strong evidence that this is Nietzsche’s view. On James’s pragmatist theory of truth, the true and the useful merge, eliminating this possibility. Either we should believe the true, which James identifies with the useful; or we should believe the useful, which James identifies with the true. I don’t know which of these very similar versions of pragmatism belong to James. They tell us to believe the same things in all possible situations, differing only hyperintensionally with regard to the content and explanatory structure of epistemic normativity. But since the questions of *BGE* 1 and the bold statement of *BGE* 4 make sense only if Nietzsche accepted both the correspondence theory of truth and pragmatism about epistemic value, this combination deserves to be called “Nietzschean pragmatism.”

Whether or not Nietzschean pragmatism is the right view about epistemic norms, it intuitively seems like a conceptually coherent position. There is no incoherence or implicit contradiction in claiming that we should believe the useful rather than the true. The conceptual coherence of Nietzschean pragmatism provides an objection to views of belief like those of Nishi Shah and David Velleman. They think it is part of the concept of belief that the norm of truth applies to it.<sup>5</sup>

### Metaethical Motivations for Pragmatism about Epistemic Value

Nietzsche’s metaethical concerns are part of what makes pragmatism about epistemic value so appealing to him. Since he doesn’t believe in objective value, he can’t regard truth as objectively valuable. But since he takes passions to give their objects subjective value, he values beliefs that have the right kinds of relations to passions and their objects.

A great deal of textual evidence suggests interpreting Nietzsche as an error theorist about moral value, which is supposed to be objective. Clear statements of error theory appear as early as *D*, where he asserts that “it is errors which, as the basis of all moral judgment, impel men to their moral actions [. . .]. I deny morality as I deny alchemy: but I do not deny that there have been alchemists who believed in these premises and acted in accordance with them—I also deny immorality: not that countless people feel themselves to be immoral, but that there is any true reason so to feel” (*D* 103). He expresses a very similar view seven years later in *TI*, this time likening morality to religion instead of alchemy: “There are altogether no moral facts. Moral judgments agree with religious ones in believing in realities which are no realities” (*TI* “Improvers” 1). Many other passages state error theory about morality in similarly clear and forceful terms.<sup>6</sup>

Nietzsche thinks we lack evidence that objective moral facts exist, just as we lack evidence that God exists. The same epistemological and metaphysical principles that lead to atheism will also lead to error theory about morality. He writes, “When one gives up the Christian faith, one pulls the right to Christian morality out from under one’s feet. This morality is by no means self-evident: this point has to be exhibited again and again, despite the English flatheads” (*TI* “Skirmishes” 5). Even fifteen years before G. E. Moore, he explains their error: “the English actually believe that they know ‘intuitively’ what is good and evil” (*TI* “Skirmishes” 5). Nietzsche thinks that objective moral facts would have to be additional facts over and above those that compose the natural world, and takes us to have no good evidence for facts of this kind. He rejects intuition as way of achieving this moral knowledge, just as he rejects revelation as a way of knowing that God exists.

If we cannot rely on intuition or anything else for evidence of objective moral facts, it’s hard to see how we could acquire evidence that truth has objective value. Even if we take truth to have a nonmoral kind of objective value, to avoid a direct contradiction with the rejection of objective moral value, we will be left with no good story about how we know that truth has this value. As Nietzsche sees it, the same principles that force us to atheism and to error theory about morality also force us to reject the objective value of truth. This is how the “problem of the value of truth” in *BGE* 1 comes before us.

While Nietzsche rejects objective value, he accepts that our passions can give things value of a subjective and nonmoral kind.<sup>7</sup> Values of taste are often understood this way. If Ariadne desires wine but not beer, wine

is good for Ariadne but beer is not. Subjective value is always indexed to some valuer whose passion makes its object valuable in this way. Moral value is not supposed to be valuable merely for a particular person but not for others, so this can't be a moral kind of value. Aesthetic value is plausibly regarded as subjective, however. If Mengxi has passions only for traditional Chinese music and Carrie has passions only for 1990s riot grrrl bands, the former will have value for Mengxi and the latter will have value for Carrie. But the favorite music of each won't have value for the other.

The subjectivist view that having value just is being the object of passion avoids the epistemological and metaphysical problems with objective value. Since we know that passions and some of their objects exist, we know that some things have value. The passions and their objects are sufficient for constituting the existence of the value. And since there aren't deep metaphysical problems with the existence of passions or the existence of most of their objects, subjective value doesn't in general pose deep metaphysical problems. The things that constitute subjective value fit nicely into a naturalistic picture of reality.

Clear textual evidence suggesting that Nietzsche's own values are subjective appears in *Z*. In "On the Spirit of Gravity," he writes, "He, however, has discovered himself who says, 'this is my good and evil'; with that he has reduced to silence the mole and dwarf who say, 'Good for all, evil for all.'" He concludes the section by saying, "'This is my way; where is yours?'—thus I answered those who asked me 'the way.' For *the* way—that does not exist." Here Zarathustra rejects objective value in favor of subjective value indexed to individuals as the subjectivist formula suggests.

A particularly beautiful statement of subjectivism appears in "On Enjoying and Suffering the Passions," where Zarathustra tells us how to talk about what we love:

If you must speak of her, then do not be ashamed to stammer of her. Then speak and stammer: "This is my good; this I love; it pleases me wholly; thus alone do I want the good. I do not want it as divine law; I do not want it as human statute and need: it shall not be a signpost for me to overearths and paradises. It is an earthly virtue that I love: there is little prudence in it, and least of all the reason of all men. But this bird built its nest within me, therefore I love and caress it; now it dwells with me, sitting on its golden eggs." Thus you shall stammer and praise your virtue.

Here Zarathustra specifically rejects several metaethical conceptions of value as objective or grounded outside individual passion—for example, as “divine law” or issuing from “the reason of all men.” He instead sees the good as grounded in “love.” Lanier Anderson has asked why Zarathustra tells us to “stammer” about it; I think Nietzsche is acknowledging that speech about such value will not live up to the standards of discourse that states objective facts. So we will fall short of the standard requirements for good discourse, much as a stammerer does. But since all value is subjective, and since it is worth violating these requirements to talk about value, we shouldn’t be ashamed.

Zarathustra nicely describes how passion constructs subjective value in “On the Thousand and One Goals”: “The fire of love glows in the names of all the virtues, and the fire of wrath. Zarathustra saw many lands and many peoples. No greater power did Zarathustra find on earth than the works of the lovers: ‘good’ and ‘evil’ are their names.” This kind of good and evil, rooted in the transitory passions of human beings, is the only kind that Nietzsche believes in. As Zarathustra says concisely in “On Self-Overcoming”: “good and evil that are not transitory, do not exist.”

This subjectivist picture makes it easy for beliefs to have instrumental value as means to achieving the objects of our passions. True beliefs are especially likely to have this value, as false beliefs often lead to failure in achieving the objects of passion. But if false belief in numbers or causal necessity is useful in delivering the objects of passion (as *BGE* 4 suggests), they may have instrumental value as well. If some beliefs play a role in our psychological economy that enables us to form and maintain particular passions, or to act in passionate ways that a fully developed Nietzschean evaluative theory might endorse, they might be instrumental in constituting value and not just in realizing it.

Pragmatism about epistemic value provides an excellent account of how beliefs can be instrumentally valuable. In summarizing this kind of pragmatism above, I characterized it as telling us to “believe the useful.” A belief that helps us achieve the objects of our passions is useful in a very obvious kind of way. If our evaluative theory tells us that having strong passions and acting on them is itself valuable, beliefs that help us cultivate our passions and act on them will be useful too. There may be even more ways in which truth attains instrumental value by allowing passions to operate in the best way they can. This is how Nietzsche’s subjectivism naturally leads him to pragmatism about epistemic value.



For those who have sufficiently strong passions for truth, truth itself could have noninstrumental value. The value would still be subjective since it is grounded in individual passion, but it would be noninstrumental, as some of the value of pleasure and survival are. Since we have passions for pleasure and for survival themselves, regardless of what they might bring about, these things have value for us as ends and not merely as means. (They may also have value as means—survival certainly does.) A passion simply for knowing the truth would give truth similar value. Subjectivism also allows false beliefs to have noninstrumental value for those whose passions favor them. A passion for having a particular kind of belief whether or not it's true would give that belief value regardless of its truth. And a passion for false belief would give false belief the same kind of intrinsic subjective value that true belief has to lovers of truth.

Since Nietzsche phrases his pragmatism in terms of the value of various beliefs for life, while subjectivism has our passions creating value, the relationship between life and passion should be clarified. In "Nietzsche on Life's Ends," John Richardson explores what it means for something to be valuable for life, interpreting him as holding that "values arise only by and in (biological) life's end-directedness and the valuing this involves. They are the intentional objects of the valuing life engages in."<sup>8</sup> To be more precise about how this end-directedness is realized, Richardson writes that Nietzsche "thinks that an 'animal' kind of valuing operates in us all the time, in the 'part' of us that we call our body. I'll refer to this lower level of valuing in us as *body values*; these are the ends in us that we share with other living things. Nietzsche speaks of this valuing whenever he speaks of our *drives*."<sup>9</sup>

Passion seems to be the psychological location of the animal valuing that constitutes life's ends on Richardson's view. Passions are encoded in our neurobiological structures. Many passions are instinctual, difficult for cultural influences to eliminate, and shared with other living things. In ordinary folk-psychological discourse, we use "passion," "drive," and "desire" more or less interchangeably. These terms refer to mental states that constitute their objects as valuable on desire-satisfaction views of value, and which drive all human motivation on the Humean theory of motivation. Identifying passions with body values and the objects of passion with the valued things is the position that this leads to, and which I attribute to him.

Here I will not be able to address the challenging interpretive question of which developments of passion Nietzsche sees as constituting the advancement and decline of life. While Nietzsche's remarks on this issue

give us some clear examples of what he sees as advancement and decline (for example, that he regards the passionate creative activity of artists as an expression of advancing life), he doesn't present a clear general theory in any of his published works, and the question of what precise theory might most accurately fit the shape of his thoughts is too difficult for me to explore here.<sup>10</sup>

The fairly general claim that I'll assume for the rest of the article is that beliefs have their value because of their relation to passion, such that furthering the ability of artists to express their creative passions will give beliefs value. While true beliefs can have value in this way, false beliefs can as well. This thought is at the heart of Nietzschean pragmatism.

### The Second *Untimely Meditation*: Nietzschean Pragmatism Applied to History

Now I'll turn to an early expression of Nietzschean pragmatism applied to the study of history. As Nietzsche recognizes, a culture's understanding of history both consists in its beliefs about the past and affects its present character. So Nietzsche's discussion of historiography in *UM* provides a nice example of how he evaluates epistemic phenomena that have practical significance. True to Nietzschean pragmatism, he evaluates various methods of studying history by examining their effects to life, praising them insofar as they promote life, and faulting them insofar as they fail to do so.

Nietzsche's discussion of historiography begins with a quotation from Goethe, who, as Brian Leiter notes,<sup>11</sup> is the German whom he most admired: "In any case, I hate everything that merely instructs me without augmenting or directly invigorating my activity." Nietzsche's commentary on the quotation displays his pragmatic evaluative commitments:

For its intention is to show why instruction without invigoration, why knowledge not attended by action, why history as a costly superfluity and luxury, must, to use Goethe's word, be seriously hated by us—hated because we still lack even the things we need and the superfluous is the enemy of the necessary. We need history, certainly, but we need it for reasons different from those for which the idler in the garden of knowledge needs it, even though he may look nobly down on our rough and charmless needs and

requirements. We need it, that is to say, for the sake of life and action, not so as to turn comfortably away from life and action, let alone for the purpose of extenuating the selfseeking life and the base and cowardly action. We want to serve history only to the extent that history serves life: for it is possible to value the study of history to such a degree that life becomes stunted and degenerate [. . .]. (*HL* Foreword)

Nietzsche recognizes that broad historical understanding isn't intrinsically very important for the promotion of life. It might be instrumentally valuable for guiding life-promoting policy decisions or for providing a new perspective on one's personal life choices, but it also might not have such effects. Nietzsche describes how "a man's historical sense and knowledge can be very limited, his horizon as narrow as that of a dweller in the Alps, all his judgments may involve injustice and he may falsely suppose that all his experiences are original to him—yet in spite of this injustice and error he will nonetheless stand there in superlative health and vigor, a joy to all who see him; while close beside him a man far more just and instructed than he sickens and collapses because the lines of his horizon are always restlessly changing, because he can no longer extricate himself from the delicate net of his judiciousness and truth for a simple act of will and desire" (*HL* 1). Historical understanding doesn't necessarily serve life, and it can in fact be pursued and exhibited in a way that provides an impediment to life's further development.

Sympathizing with Nietzsche's criticism of historical knowledge that doesn't serve life and action is easy when one considers his graduate education in classical philology. Learning many aspects of ancient history can give us a broader perspective on our own lives, and it helps us appreciate the sheer diversity of forms that human nature and society have taken. But it's hard for most of us to see similar value in learning the grammatical intricacies of ancient languages for their own sake as philologists do. While philologists' precise and detailed knowledge of ancient grammar may be instrumentally helpful when they try to draw insight from ancient texts, knowledge of these details is not, in itself, an object of most of our passions. Spending years in a postgraduate program built around pursuing knowledge of this kind without concern for its broader applicability to life may have impressed this fact on Nietzsche, and led him to a distinctively pragmatist view of the study of history.

After making it clear to readers how history might fail to serve life, Nietzsche expresses the purpose of the second essay: “Let us at least learn better how to employ history for the purpose of life!” (*HL* 1). The monumental, antiquarian, and critical modes of history, which Nietzsche discusses at length in this essay, are introduced and evaluated as ways that history might be employed for the benefit of life. Nietzsche contrasts these modes of historiography with an approach that pursues knowledge for knowledge’s sake: “These are the services history is capable of performing for life; every man and every nation requires, in accordance with its goals, energies and needs, a certain kind of knowledge of the past, now in the form of monumental, now of antiquarian, now of critical history: but it does not require it as a host of pure thinkers who only look on at life, of knowledge-thirsty individuals whom knowledge alone will satisfy and to whom the accumulation of knowledge is itself the goal, but always and only for the ends of life and thus also under the domination and supreme direction of these ends” (*HL* 4). As I’ll describe, Nietzsche’s evaluation of the various modes of history is fundamentally pragmatic, focusing on their utility for life rather than whether they help us grasp objective historical truth.

The monumental mode of history presents us with examples of heroic people doing great deeds. Nietzsche sees it as advancing life by inspiring the person “who fights a great fight, who needs models, teachers, comforters and cannot find them among his contemporaries” (*HL* 2). He describes how such people might be energized by their predecessors’ triumphs over obstacles. In light of how much his philosophy emphasizes great people doing great deeds, the significance of this role for monumentalist history wouldn’t have been lost on him. But Nietzsche also recognizes that monumentalist history can be an impediment to doing great deeds in the present. He provides a vivid image of how “inartistic natures” might use monumentalist history against “strong artistic spirits” when “a half-understood monument to some great era of the past is erected as an idol and zealously danced around, as though to say: ‘Behold, this is true art: pay no heed to those who are evolving and want something new!’” (*HL* 2).

The antiquarian mode of history helps us better appreciate things in our lives by putting them in the context of a venerated past. Nietzsche writes that “this antiquarian sense of veneration of the past is of the greatest value when it spreads a simple feeling of pleasure and contentment over the modest; rude, even wretched conditions in which a man or a nation lives” (*HL* 3). But antiquarian history creates disadvantages for life when it traps one

within the past, making one satisfied with insignificant things only because they're the same things that satisfied one's ancestors. Under these circumstances, new artistic forms and creative developments to which the passions of the living drive them can be denigrated and rejected in comparison to venerated works of the past. Antiquarian history becomes harmful for life when it "paralyses the man of action who, as one who acts, will and must offend some piety or other" (*HL 3*).

Critical history, which "judges and condemns" the past (*HL 2*), provides an especially illuminating development of Nietzschean pragmatism. Critical history dissolves and destroys historical ideas that no longer serve life, clearing away the excesses of monumentalist and antiquarian history when they obstruct the development of life. It does so by carefully examining and condemning the past. While Nietzsche doesn't go into great detail about how critical history could injure life, he does describe critical history as a "dangerous process, especially so for life itself" (*HL 3*). Presumably his thought is that monumental history provides inspiration and antiquarian history provides contentment, so critical history might by destroying them leave us unable to find inspiration or contentment in history.

In Nietzsche's remarks about how critical history relates to a just appraisal of the past, we get a clear picture of how the judgments of life might tend toward historical truth.

If he is to live, man must possess and from time to time employ the strength to break up and dissolve a part of the past: he does this by bringing it before the tribunal, scrupulously examining it and finally condemning it; every past, however, is worthy to be condemned—for that is the nature of human things: human violence and weakness have always played a mighty role in them. It is not justice which here sits in judgment; it is even less mercy which pronounces the verdict: it is life alone, that dark, driving power that insatiably thirsts for itself. Its sentence is always unmerciful, always unjust, because it has never proceeded out of a pure well of knowledge; but in most cases the sentence would be the same even if it were pronounced by justice itself. (*HL 3*)

I take "justice" in this passage to be whatever would have the strength to resist powerful biases and provide an impartial view of history. Nietzsche tells us that critical history doesn't come from such a perspective. Instead,

it comes from the perspective of life. The past is condemned not by forces impartially seeking objective truth, but from new living forces of the present oppressed by excessive veneration of the past. But this allows critical history to be a process that discovers the truth in a large proportion of actual cases. Despite the partiality of critical history, it often pronounces the same sentence as justice would, simply because human violence and weakness are ubiquitous.

This passage suggests that there is a place for truth in Nietzschean pragmatist practice. While Nietzschean pragmatists won't value truth for its own sake, their judgments will in most cases coincide with the truth. In many ordinary cases, error is an impediment to achieving passion's ends. The judgments that serve life's purposes often happen to be true.

### Nietzsche's Path to His Pragmatism

Readers may have noticed that I have discussed Nietzsche's works in the reverse of the order in which they were published. I began with the official statements of Nietzschean pragmatism in *BGE*, published in 1886. Discussing *Zarathustra*, published between 1883 and 1885, I presented the metaethical problem for objective value that led Nietzsche to this view. Finally, I came to the applications of this view in *UM*, published in the mid-1870s. Why?

The process by which a theory reveals itself to proponents may differ from the process by which the theory is most clearly explained in a journal article. Here I've presented Nietzsche's view by clearly stating it, presenting the theoretical considerations that motivated it, and then demonstrating its application to a question of practical significance. This, I thought, would be the clearest presentation of Nietzsche's view of epistemic value. Nietzsche himself seems to have begun with pragmatist answers to the questions of practical significance, and then after considering metaethical problems with regarding truth as objectively valuable, arrived at a theory of epistemic value that reflected his views on practical questions. In passages like *BGE* 3, he often describes philosophers as arriving at their theoretical views by beginning from more immediately practical motivations. The way he developed his pragmatism bears out his own metaphilosophical theory.

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## NOTES

1. Citations to Nietzsche's work refer to the following translations: *Beyond Good and Evil*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966); *Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Daybreak*, ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Twilight of the Idols*, in the *Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin, 1954), 463–563.

2. Stathis Psillos, *Scientific Realism: How Science Tracks Truth* (London: Routledge, 1999).

3. William James, *Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), 106. Similarities between Nietzsche and James were noted by James Lindsay, "A Critical Estimate of Nietzsche's Philosophy," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 72 (1915): 67–82; and John Warbeke, "Friedrich Nietzsche, Antichrist, Superman, and Pragmatist," *Harvard Theological Review* 2.3 (1909): 366–85. For discussion, see Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen, *American Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

4. Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 32. The reference is to Arthur Danto, *Nietzsche as Philosopher* (New York: Macmillan, 1965).

5. Nishi Shah, "How Truth Governs Belief," *Philosophical Review* 112.4 (2003): 447–82; Nishi Shah and David Velleman, "Doxastic Deliberation," *Philosophical Review* 114.4 (2005): 497–534.

6. See, e.g., *D* 3, 11, 32, and 100; *Z* III: "Old and New Tablets" 9; *BGE* 11, 108.

7. Neil Sinhababu, "Zarathustra's Metaethics," *Canadian Journal of Philosophy* 45.3 (2015): 278–99.

8. John Richardson, "Nietzsche on Life's Ends," in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. John Richardson and Ken Gemes (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 756–84, 771.

9. Richardson, "Nietzsche on Life's Ends," 767.

10. See Thomas Hurka, "Nietzsche: Perfectionist," in *Nietzsche and Morality*, ed. Brian Leiter and Neil Sinhababu (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 9–31.

11. Brian Leiter, "Nietzsche and the Morality Critics," *Ethics* 107.2 (1997): 250–85.