Wirklich. Wirklichkeit. Wirklichkeiten
Nietzsche über „wahre"
und „scheinbare" Welten

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Pietro Gori

Nietzsche on Truth: a Pragmatic View?

I. Nietzsche's utilitarian view of truth

The critique to the notion of truth is one of the most important (and most discussed) topics of Nietzsche's thought. This critique sustains his philosophical views, and with them it changes, from the unpublished writing on *Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense* to the late observations concerning the superfluousness of the ‚true world' in *Twilight of the Idols*. During the years, Nietzsche's concerning with truth left the pure theoretical plane, and started involving the moral one, that of human agency. In so doing, Nietzsche shows the philosophical relevance of his critique, i. e. its dealing with the core of the Metaphysical worldview, of the Western (both Platonic and Christian) thought.[1] Since the notion of truth is strictly related to those of good and ‚full of value' (NL 14[103], KSA 13, 280), the awareness of its inner lack of content, and consequently the rejection of its absolute value as reference point for the human existence, leads to the well known disorientation of the human being about which the madman warns people in FW 125. Nietzsche's dealing with truth has been stressed by many scholars during the last decades[2], and I believe that there is no need of treating once more the basic questions concerning that topic. My aim in this paper is rather to stress both one fundamental character of Nietzsche's theory of knowledge, in order to show its compliance with some 19th and 20th century philosophical views, and the role that his epistemology played in Nietzsche's late thought.

The topic with which I basically deal in this paper is Nietzsche's stating a mere relative character of truth. This idea follows from Nietzsche's fundamental view according to which human knowledge is interpretation. This is a well known feature of Nietzsche's thought, a topic that many scholar stressed for its philosophical relevance.[3] There is no

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[1] See Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsches Neubestimmug der Wahrheit,* in: *Nietzsche-Studien*, 14 (1985), 69–95.

[2] Among the others, two fundamental studies on this topic are Ruediger H. Grimm, *Nietzsche's Theory of Knowledge*, Berlin, New York 1977 and Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy,* Cambridge 1990.

[3] See e. g. Günter Abel, *Nietzsche. Die Dynamik der Willen zur Macht und die ewige Wiederkehr*, Berlin, New York 1998, Chapter VI, and Johan Figl, *Interpretation als philosophisches Prinzip. Friedrich Nietzsches universale Theorie der Auslegung im späten Nachlaß*, Berlin, New York 1982.

„knowledge in itself" – states Nietzsche in GM III 24;[4] moreover, there is no knowledge of a „thing in itself": what can be known by the human beings is only something conditioned – something that presupposes a relationship between the object and the knowing subject (NL 2 [154], KSA 12, 141 f.). If we consider the word ‚interpretation' in a wide sense – so to say, both in a physiological and in a hermeneutic sense –, it is easy to see that Nietzsche's principle characterizes his whole theory of knowledge. His first statements concerning the metaphorical value of language (WL); his early observations concerning the physiological ‚falsification'[5] of reality; his later perspectivism[6] – all these topics can be related to the idea that to know is to interpret, that the knowing subject plays an active role in her relationship with things, and she thus ‚creates' something, instead of merely replicate a state of affairs.[7] What follows from that view is first of all a rejection of the traditional character of truth, i. e. its being absolute and undisputable. On the contrary, as we all know, according to Nietzsche there is no ‚Truth', but only an indefinite amount of world-interpretations, of world-descriptions, of viewpoints that cannot be *a priori* rejected as ‚absolutely false'.[8] Most important, anything that one can say about reality falls within these interpretations, i. e. „the ‚apparent' world is the only world", while the „true world" reveals its inner lack of content (GD, KSA 6, 75). According to this view, if we want to keep on describing the world in terms of ‚true' and ‚false' (a very useful attitude, as I will later show), that must be done within the pure human realm of the ‚appearances'. In JGB 34 Nietzsche stresses this point, by arguing that „if, with the virtuous enthusiasm and inanity of many philosophers, someone wanted to completely abolish the ‚world of appearances', – well, assuming *you* could do that, – at least there would not be any of your ‚truth' left either! Actually, why do we even assume that ‚true' and ‚false' are in-

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4   See also NL 15 [9]: „Our knowledge is not knowledge in itself, moreover it is not even knowledge, but rather a chain of deductions and spider's webs: it is the result of thousands years of necessary optical errors – necessary, since we basically want to live –, errors, since any perspectival law is basically an error" (KSA, 9, 637).

5   The interpretation of Nietzsche's ‚falsification thesis' is probably the most discussed topic of Clark's book from 1990. See Mattia Riccardi, *Il tardo Nietzsche e la falsificazione*, in: Pietro Gori, Paolo Stellino (eds.), *Teorie e pratiche della verità in Nietzsche,* Pisa 2011, 57–73.

6   Although Nietzsche's perspectivism is strictly related with his theory of knowledge, and chiefly with his ‚falsification thesis', its meaning is not merely theoretic. I think that the meanings of the word ‚interpretation' in Nietzsche can be understood by focusing on the differences between the purely physiological processes of both the sense organs and the human intellect (which ‚falsify' the world), and the perspectival knowledge of the world peculiar to the human being. I recently dealt with the practical value of Nietzsche's perspectivism in Pietro Gori, *Il „prospettivismo". Epistemologia ed etica*, in: Pietro Gori-Paolo Stellino (eds.), *Teorie e pratiche della verità in Nietzsche*, 101–123.

7   In 1885 Nietzsche defined the human being „a shapes and rhythms moulding creature" (NL 38 [10], KSA, 11, 608).

8   Although – as Volker Gerhardt argues in his *Die Perspektive des Perspektivismus* (*Nietzsche-Studien*, 18 (1989), 260–281, 279) – Nietzsche mostly focuses on the human being, it is not clear who really is the subject of his perspectivism. In his writings Nietzsche refers to the species, to the human being, and also to the indefinite number of „centres of force", each of whom „adopts a perspective toward the entire reminder, i. e., its own particular valuation, mode of action, and mode of resistance" (NL 14 [184], KSA, 13, 371). See Pietro Gori, *Il „prospettivismo"*, 111 ff., and Christoph Cox, *The „Subject" of Nietzsche's Perspectivism*, in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 35 (1997), 269–291.

trinsically opposed? Isn't it enough to assume that there are levels of appearance and, as it were, lighter and darker shades and tones of appearance […]?" (JGB, KSA 5, 53 f.).

The last line of this quote is of the greatest importance, since it characterizes Nietzsche's attitude towards a potential nihilism. The elimination of the ‚true world' leaves an empty space, that cannot be filled with anything, since every absolute reference point of human knowledge (and agency) is rejected as ‚unattainable', ‚unprovable', and ‚superfluous' (GD, KSA 6, 80). By completely eliminating that metaphysical plane, and therefore by referring only to the ‚apparent world', Nietzsche makes a step beyond the traditional dualistic view, but exposes his own philosophy to the danger of becoming a mere relativistic worldview. If the world is painted only with human colours (MA I, KSA 2, 16), how can we find the reference points to orient ourselves to the world, both in a theoretical and in a practical sense? Nietzsche seems to be aware of this danger, and his aim is clearly to help the human being to find a way out of the maze of nihilism. Mostly in his later writings Nietzsche clearly shows how to manage the disorientation that follows from the ‚dead of God', and furthermore how to turn it in a strongly positive attitude towards life. In his view, the emptiness of the ‚true world' becomes the open see for a new navigation, and the prevailing feeling of the philosopher is the ‚cheerfulness' (*Heiterkeit*) to which Nietzsche refers in FW 343 and in the *Preface* of GD. Nietzsche's relativistic view is therefore not nihilistic at all, since he leaves the space for a determination of both ‚true' and ‚false' within the limits of the ‚apparent world'. The lack of content is indeed attributed only to that absolute and immutable Truth that is traditionally seen as an eternal idol,[9] but not to the many truths which represent the necessary reference points of human life (since they make it manageable). That is a very important – but often neglected – point. Some scholars indeed focus on Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics, and stress only the *pars destruens* of his theory of knowledge (his falsification thesis). By so doing, they pretend that Nietzsche's use of the word ‚true' is always the same, and don't consider that he is rather moving on two different planes, involving two different meanings of the same word.[10] More specifically, as we read in JGB 34, Nietzsche's rejection of truth as correspondence to reality does not entails that we must live without referring points. Nietzsche is rather aimed at re-defining the relationship between ‚true' and ‚false', and tries to find the principles of an evaluation that would not consider them as in opposition anymore. Moreover, if we accept that knowledge is interpretation, and therefore that the world we know is basically ‚erroneous'[11], then it is only possible to temporarily adopt some of these errors as the ground of our world-description (and, consequently, of our agency).

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9   See EH, Twilight of the Idols 1: „What the word ‚idol' on the title page means is quite simply what had been called truth so far. *Twilight of the Idols* – in plain language: the end of the old truth…" (KSA, 6, 354).

10   According to Maudemarie Clark, both Wolfgang Müller-Lauter and Ruediger Grimm „think that Nietzsche discards our ordinary concept of truth and replaces it with a new use of ‚true' and ‚false'" (Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 33). Clark, on the contrary, focuses on Nietzsche's falsification thesis, and criticizes his making reference to truth in the later period of work, after his rejection of the thing in itself.

11   This erroneousness must be understood in terms of the old notion of truth, i. e. of truth as agreement with reality. Nietzsche's thesis is that our knowledge is erroneous, since we only know things after having modified them, and never as they are in themselves. That is something that has been dis-

What we now need is the criterion of this new evaluation of the referring points of our world-description. Since we cannot make reference to a ‚true world‘ anymore, our evaluation must remain on the plane of our knowledge itself. Moreover, since our knowledge is a fundamental tool for us in order to manage things, one possibility is to evaluate it in utilitarian terms – i. e. in terms of its usefulness for our practical purposes. That is what Nietzsche argues in a very important note from 1888, where he deals with the origin of human belief in the explanatory power of his knowledge and its adaptive role: „The aberration of philosophy is that, instead of seeing in logic and the categories of reason means toward the adjustment of the world for utilitarian ends (basically, toward an expedient falsification), one believed one possessed in them the criterion of truth and reality. The ‚criterion of truth‘ was in fact merely the biological utility of such a system of systematic falsification; and since a species of animal knows of nothing more important than its own preservation, one might indeed be permitted to speak here of ‚truth‘. The *naiveté* was to take an anthropocentric idiosyncrasy as the measure of things, as the rule for determining ‚real‘ and ‚unreal‘: in short, to make absolute something conditioned“ (NL 14 [153], KSA 13, 336).

This note represents the last stage of a reflection that started in the 1870s, and that Nietzsche carried on until his mental collapse. The basic idea, published with particular clarity in FW 110, is that human knowledge has been fundamental for the preservation of our species. According to Nietzsche, the schematization and simplification of reality provided by our intellect, its modifying that reality, is an unavoidable tool for the human being, in order to win the struggle for life. From the first stages of the human life, the usefulness of the categories of reason has been taken as sign of its truthfulness, and Nietzsche seems to agree with that evaluation – provided that this truthfulness does not mean ‚agreement with reality‘. Since „we cannot cut off [our] head“ (MA I, KSA 2, 29), and therefore there is no way to compare the reality processed by our intellect with any ‚thing in itself‘, the only plane we can refer to, in order to define ‚true‘ and ‚false‘, is that of our own world-representation:[12] „Truth does not signify the antithesis of error but the status of certain errors vis-à-vis others, such as being older, more deeply assimilated,

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cussed, especially from Clark, since Nietzsche cannot know if our sense organs or our intellect give us the reality as it is (even thought it is highly improbable that they do so). Moreover, what Clark chiefly criticizes is Nietzsche's talking about ‚erroneousness‘ and ‚falsification‘ in his later writings, after his rejection of the thing in itself. According to Clark, if there is no thing in itself, than it is not possible to say that a knowledge is ‚erroneous‘, since there is nothing to which it can be compared. That is true, but Clark fails in claming that Nietzsche rejects the *existence* of a thing in itself. Nietzsche in fact never does that; he never denies that there is something beyond our perception and our intellectual knowledge of things. Nietzsche simply rejects the usefulness of referring to reality in itself, since he believes that we cannot know anything out of both the testimony of the senses and their intellectual modification. Thus, our knowledge is with all likelihood something different from how reality is in itself, but at the same time that reality is something ‚unattainable‘, ‚unprovable‘, and ‚superfluous‘. Moreover, as Nietzsche writes, „to err is the condition of living. So strongly err, in fact. To know the error does not delete it! That is nothing bitter! We must love and improve our errors, since they are the basis of our knowledge“ (NL 11 [162], KSA, 9, 504).

12 The ‚aberration of philosophy‘ which Nietzsche talks about comes from the idea that the usefulness of the categories of reason are a sign of their *reality*, i. e. that their truthfulness is metaphysical (that they describe the things as they *are* in themselves), and not merely fictitious.

our not knowing how to live without them, and so on. […] The valuations must stand in some kind of relation to the conditions of existence, but by no means that of being *true*, or *exact*. The essential thing is precisely their inexactitude, indeterminacy, which gives rise to a kind of *simplification of the external world* – and precisely this sort of intelligence favours survival" (NL 34 [247], KSA 11, 503 f.).[13]

This utilitarian view of truth is biologically grounded, but under its surface we find a more general idea. Nietzsche's aim, in dealing with human knowledge, is primarily to understand how the metaphysical worldview has been generated, and he therefore focuses on the adaptive role of the intellect. According to him, our world-picture evolved during the development of our species (MA I, KSA, 2, 16), and what we now believe to be real is only a very useful interpretation of things. That utilitarian view can be applied not only to a long-lasting event such as the development of the human brain, but also to any world-description and world-interpretation, in both a theoretical and a practical sense. Thus, Nietzsche's statements on the possibility of assuming ‚true' and ‚false' as ‚levels of appearance' does not only pertain to the biological level of human knowledge, but it rather can be adopted as a more general evaluation principle. ‚True' is therefore what is relatively more useful, what ‚pays', whose effects are ‚better', depending on what we need. Of course, what is important at the most is human life, and that is what Nietzsche stresses in his writings (mostly notebooks. See e. g. NL 6 [421], KSA 9, 306). But the utilitarian principle can be applied for example to science, and a scientific world-description can be ‚true' for it is the most explanatory and economic – but not since it reveals the inner structure of reality.

This outcome of Nietzsche's theory of knowledge – the idea that the truth-value is merely relative, and that it is the result of an utilitarian evaluation – persuaded some scholars to compare Nietzsche's view with the pragmatism of William James.[14] As I will show in what follows, there are many elements supporting this comparison, which can be properly understood in the light of the late 19th century philosophy of science. During the last decades, many scholars stressed the tight connection between Nietzsche's thought and some of the most significant outcomes of the science of his time.[15] With regard to his theory of knowledge, and the view of truth which follows from that, it is possible to

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[13] Nietzsche also states the biological value of truth in NL 6 [421], KSA 9; NL 25 [372], KSA 10; NL 14 [105], KSA 13.

[14] See e. g. Ludwig Marcuse, *Nietzsche in Amerika*, in: Harold von Hofe (hg.), *Essays, Porträts, Polemiken aus vier Jahrzenten*, Zürich 1950, 91–103; id., *Amerikanisches Philosophieren. Pragmatisten, Polytheisten, Tragiker,* Hamburg 1959; Kai-Michael Hingst, *Perspektivismus und Pragmatismus. Ein Vergleich auf der Grundlage der Wahrheitsbegriffe und der Religionsphilosophien von Nietzsche und James*, Würzburg 1998; Id., *Nietzsche Pragmaticus. Die Verwandtschaft von Nietzsches Denken mit dem Pragmatismus von William James*, in: *Nietzscheforschung*, 7 (2000), 287–306; Rossella Fabbrichesi, *Nietzsche and James. A Pragmatist Hermeneutic*, in: *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy*, 1 (2009), 25–40.

[15] The first important studies concerning the scientific sources of Nietzsche's thought has been carried out by Alwin Mittasch, in his *Friedrich Nietzsches Naturbeflissenheit*, Heidelberg 1950, and *Nietzsche als Naturphilosoph*, Stuttgart, 1952. More recently, studies on that topic have been published in Thomas Brobjer, Gregory Moore (eds.), *Nietzsche and Science*, Aldershot 2004; Helmut Heit, Günter Abel, Marco Brusotti (Hg.), *Nietzsches Wissenschaftsphilosophie*, Berlin 2012; Helmut Heit, Lisa Heller (Hg.), *Handbuch Nietzsche und die Wissenschaften*, Berlin 2013.

stress that Nietzsche shares with the 19th century science the idea that ‚truth‘ is something that we establish from a theoretical point of view, and not discover into things.[16] During the second half of the 19th century, the scientists discussed about the explanatory power of their own discipline, and some of them rejected the old mechanistic worldview, since they found it marked by a bad metaphysics. More specifically, the Newtonian physics was too deeply grounded on the belief in unchanging and absolute principles, while the new (non-Euclidean) mathematics showed the possibility of calculating the world with different ones – all of them equally ‚true‘ on the theoretical plane. These discovers contributed to change the view of the power of scientific investigations, and in particular led to a rejection of the belief in an absolutely certain truth attainable through mathematics. A pioneer of this rejection of the explanatory power of mechanism has been Ernst Mach, a scientist whose epistemological studies strongly influenced 20th century science and philosophy, and whose name during the last decades has been quoted in several studies on Nietzsche.[17] James explicitly refers to him many times, and it is possible to argue that his pragmatism is grounded on a pure Machian view. In the following sections I will first consider the fundamental ideas of Mach's epistemology, and compare them with some basic outcomes of Nietzsche's theory of knowledge. I will then turn to James, in order to deal with his pragmatism in the light of the new philosophy of science, and show the similarity between his view of truth and that of Nietzsche.[18] In the final section I will

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[16] See Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsches Neubestimmung der Wahrheit*, 89. A comparison between Nietzsche's view and that of Heisenberg has been carried out by Jochen Kirchoff, *Zum Problem der Erkenntnis bei Nietzsche,* in: *Nietzsche-Studien*, 5 (1977), 17–44.

[17] On Mach's influence on 20th century scientific and philosophical thought see Phillip Franck, *Modern Science and its Philosophy,* Cambridge 1949; John Blackmore, *Ernst Mach. His Work, Life, and Influence*, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London 1972; Friedrich Stadler, *Von Positivismus zur „Wissenschaftlichen Weltauffassung"*, Wien, München 1982. As regards the comparison between Nietzsche and Mach, the most recent studies on that topic showed that we cannot consider Mach as a direct source of Nietzsche. Nietzsche in fact bought and read Mach's *Beiträge zur Analyse der Empfindungen* in 1886, but most of the ideas that he shared with Mach can be found in earlier writings (see Pietro Gori, *The Usefulness of Substances. Knowledge, Science and Metaphysics in Nietzsche and Mach*, in: *Nietzsche-Studien* 38 (2009), 111 ff.). Most likely, they both shared a common debate (thinkers such as Fechner, Spencer, and Lichtenberg), and from that source they developed their comparable theories of knowledge. I dealt more exhaustively with that topic in Pietro Gori, *Il meccanicismo metafisico. Scienza, filosofia e storia in Nietzsche e Mach*, Bologna 2009. Nadeem Hussain also dealt with a comparison between Nietzsche and Mach in his *Reading Nietzsche through Ernst Mach*, in: Gregory Moore, Thomas Brobjer (eds.), *Nietzsche and Science*, 111–129.

[18] At the beginning of the 20th century Hans Kleinpeter, a pupil and friend of Mach, first argued that Nietzsche shared some of the basic features of Mach's epistemology. He particularly highlighted the connection between Nietzsche, Mach and Pragmatism, claiming that they all played a leading role in overcoming Kantian philosophy by taking on a biological theory of truth (Kleinpeter pays particularly attention to Kant's view of the absolute value of concepts. See e. g. Hans Kleinpeter, *Nietzsche als Schulreformer*, in: *Blätter für deutsche Erziehung* 14 (1912), 100, and id., *Der Phänomenalismus, eine naturwissenschaftliche Weltauffassung*, Leipzig 1913). Kleinpeter also stressed the similarity between Nietzsche's philosophy and Pragmatism in a letter to Mach sent on 22. 12. 1911 (See Pietro Gori, *Drei Briefe von Hans Kleinpeter an Ernst Mach über Nietzsche*, in: *Nietzsche-Studien*, 40 (2011), 290–298). I dealt with Kleinpeter's interest in Nietzsche in Pietro Gori, *Nietzsche as Phenomenalist?*, in: Helmut Heit, Günter Abel, Marco Brusotti (Hg.), *Nietzsches Wissenschaftsphilosophie*, 345–355.

consider Nietzsche's ‚pragmatic' view, and focus on the role that it played in his late philosophy.

II. Elements of a new epistemology

The guiding lines of Mach's epistemology are well expressed in a lecture held at the Royal Bohemian Society of Sciences in 1871, titled *The History and the Root of the Principle of Conservation of Work* (or *energy*, as one reads in some translations).[19] Here we find the fundamental ideas of a quite new perspective, whose basic statement is that both physical concepts and laws have a mere relative and historical value, and in no way can be seen as an absolutely ‚true' description of the world. This view undermines the very ground of the science of mechanics by revealing its metaphysical character. According to Mach, ‚metaphysical' are indeed the scientific notions assumed with no reference to their genealogical development. In the opening pages of that work, Mach indeed states that „we accustomed to call concepts metaphysical, if we have forgotten how we reached them" (GEA, 17).[20] With these words he does not reject the usefulness of these concepts; he only stresses their relative value, and warns the scientists not to mistake the pure logical function of the notions they use with their ontological content.[21] In Mach's view, the way to get the scientific knowledge rid of any dogmatic heritage is therefore an inquiry concerning the genesis of the notions daily used in physics, psychology etc., since it reveals their development during the history of thought and culture.[22]

Mach first presented the idea of the usefulness of a retrospective look some years before, in his *Über die Definition der Masse* (1868), by suggesting what he later wrote in this terms: „One can never lose one's footing, or come into collision with facts, if one

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[19] Mach published that lecture the following year (Prague, 1872). Nietzsche wrote the title of this essays in a note from 1882, among other books that he read some years before. Alwin Mittasch first discovered it, as we read in his *Friedrich Nietzsches Naturbeflissenheit*, 186. Nietzsche's note has been then published in the critical apparatus of KGW (VII/4/2, 67).

[20] I will use the following abbreviations for Mach's works: GEA = *History and Root of the Principle of Conservation of Energy,* Chicago 1911; ME = *The Science of Mechanics. A Critical and Historical Account of its Development*, Chicago, London 1919; AE = *The Analysis of Sensations, and the Relation of the Physical to the Psychical*, Chicago, London 1914.
To avoid any misunderstanding, it is important to say that Mach's view of this topic is far from the idea of a logical analysis of the scientific notions; his aim is rather to show the importance of working with concepts whose origin is known, or can at least be found through a genealogical reconstruction. Mach's epistemology should thus not be interpreted in an analytical way, so to say, *à la* Wittgenstein or – better – *à la* Carnap. Even though Carnap directly referred to Mach in carrying on his new philosophical perspective, the latter was a pure ‚continental' philosopher with a peculiar interest in the history of his own discipline, in its genealogical development.

[21] Mach's way of reasoning here is notably close to Nietzsche's late critical remarks to the philosophers who ‚dehistoricize' the concepts of reason, and „turn them into a mummy" (GD, KSA 6, 74). I will come back to this at the end of this section.

[22] In GEA, Mach writes: „Quite analogous difficulties lie in wait for us when we go to school and take up more advanced studies, when propositions which have often cost several thousand years' labour of thought are represented to us as self-evident. Here too there is only one way to enlightenment: historical studies" (GEA, 16).

always keeps in view the path by which one has come" (GEA, 17). He soon developed his idea in a wider project concerning the historical explanation of both scientific concepts and laws, a project briefly outlined in the conference from 1871, and with which Mach dealt in his later works, e. g. in the books concerning *The Science of Mechanics* (1883) and the *Analysis of Sensations* (1886). Within these texts, the first one is probably the most important, since it clearly shows that in dealing with his own discipline Mach aimed to carry on „a critical and historical account of its development" (as the subtitle of his *Science of Mechanics* indicates). Moreover, according to him, a ‚critical' analysis of the principles of the Newtonian physics can be provided only through a historical reconstruction of their genesis. In the opening pages of this work, Mach writes that the aim of his volume is „to clear up ideas, expose the real significance of the matter, and get rid of metaphysical obscurities" (ME, x). Thus, his critical aim has a deep „anti-metaphysical" value, as he himself sometimes states.[23] Moreover, Mach explains that „the gist and kernel of mechanical ideas has in almost every case grown up in the investigation of very simple and special cases of mechanical processes; and the analysis of the history of the discussions concerning these cases must ever remain the method at once the most effective and the most natural for laying this gist and kernel's bare. Indeed, it is not too much to say that it is the only way in which a real comprehension of the general upshot of mechanics is to be attained" (ME, x–xi).

According to Mach the historical analysis allows us to get „the positive and physical essence of mechanics" rid of the „mass of technical considerations" beneath which it's buried, and which conceals how the principles of mechanics „have been ascertained, from what sources they take their origin, and how far they can be regarded as permanent acquisitions" (ME, x). This analysis therefore shows the inner side of the scientific notions, and reveal their being mere ideas, thought symbols (*Gedankensymbol*)[24] that human beings created during their development, and that change together with the ‚paradigm shifts' (to use Kuhn's words). Mach dealt for the first time with the use of history for science in his lecture on the *Principle of Conservation*, by claiming that this is the only tool we have to see the frequently changing of views, concepts, and theories, and thus to let us „get used to the fact that science is unfinished and variable" (GEA, 17).

In stressing the historical nature of science, Mach also argues the inner impermanence of its notions, since they are only the result of an ever changing and improving description of the natural world. Thus, as regards this topic, Mach clearly assumes the concepts to be only resting points of our mind, thought symbols that a scientist temporarily adopt as the best result that until now has been reached in his field of study. These ‚labels' are first of all useful to save experience and let the scientists communicate the results of their studies to other researchers who will carry on the formers' work. That is what Mach thinks in talking about an ‚economical' office of science: „Science is communicated by instruction, in order that one man may profit by the experience of another and be spared the trouble of accumulating it from himself" (ME, 481). In the 1871 conference he pre-

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23   Mach explicitly declares that in the *Preface* to ME. Furthermore, the opening paragraph of the first chapter of AE is titled „first anti-metaphysical principles".

24   Mach uses the word *Gedankensymbol* for example in AE, 254 and 296. This is a fundamental concept of Mach's analysis of the scientific world-description, as James himself highlights in his lectures on Pragmatism. I will turn to this in the following section.

sented the same idea by stating that a formula, a scientific law has „no more real value than the aggregate of the individual facts" explained by it. „Its value for us lies merely in the convenience of its use: it has an economical value" (GEA, 55).[25] It is easy to see that this perspective directly follows from Mach's view on the development of his own discipline, since he thinks that the physicists (but the same can be said for what concerns the researchers working in other fields) keep on creating new concepts that would adapt in a better way to the objects or to the processes they want to explain.[26] On the philosophical plane, that leads to a new evaluation of the results of scientific investigation: even though the practical usefulness of the concepts daily used cannot be denied, one must say that they have a mere relative value on the ontological plane, and thus reject (or at least limit) the ‚truthfulness' of scientific knowledge. According to Mach, unlike both 17th and 18th century scientists, any concept has to be defined only as a methodological reference point to describe and manage the natural world. Again, the scientific notions are mere thought symbols which do not lead to something stable and permanent under the becoming surface of our sensations. In a way very close to Nietzsche's perspective, Mach rejects the reference to any kind of thing in itself: even though he never claims that it does not exist, he states that it is not important to make reference to it, in order to investigate our own reality (since that is a pure phenomenal world. See AE, 29–31).

The best starting point to stress the similarity between Mach's view of truth and that of Nietzsche is the definition of ‚metaphysical concepts' published in GEA. The idea that we „call concepts metaphysical, if we have forgotten how we reached them" can indeed be compared to Nietzsche's well-known statement in *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-moral Sense,* according to which „truths are illusions of which one has forgotten that they are illusions" (WL, KSA 1, 881). In this unpublished work Nietzsche calls ‚truth' a schematization of the external data which value is related (or even mistaken) with both its practical usefulness and its having been helpful for the preservation of the species. Therefore, ‚truth' is a concept that has never been brought into question and, after a long time, has been adopted with no reference to its origin. In particular, Nietzsche talks about „metaphors that have become worn-out and deprived of their sensuous force, coins that have lost their imprint and are now no longer seen as coins but as metal" (ibid.). As well as the metaphysical notions with which Mach deals in GEA, the truths that Nietzsche describes in WL are the result of a wrong judgment, since they're isolated from the process of becoming which they are part of. On the contrary, both the scientific concepts and these truths can be properly described only through a historical analysis.

Nietzsche's early criticism towards the notion of truth follows from his idea that a genealogical reconstruction tracing the development of human thought is the only tool we have to enlighten the character of the notions that we usually adopt, the „mobile army

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[25] In the endnote to this claim Mach writes that „in science we are chiefly concerned with the convenience and saving of thought", and that „the moment of inertia, the central ellipsoid, and so on, are simply examples of substitutes by means of which we conveniently save ourselves the consideration of the single mass-points" (GEA, 88).

[26] In 1910 Mach summed up this ‚evolutionary' interpretation of the investigating process talking about the „*adaptation of the ideas to the facts and the adaptation of the ideas to themselves*" (Ernst Mach, *Die Leitgedanken meiner naturwissenschaftlichen Erkenntnislehre und ihre Aufnahme durch die Zeitgenossen*, in: *Scientia*, 7 (1910), 225–240).

of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms" which are nothing but illusions of knowledge. Nietzsche clearly states that in the first section of *Human, all too Human*, where he deals with many questions first treated in WL (but left unpublished). As I pointed out in the first section of this paper, in MA 16 Nietzsche argues that the concepts commonly used to describe the external world are a gradually evolved and still evolving product of our intellect. According to him, „it is the human intellect that has made appearance appear and transported its erroneous basic conceptions into things. Late, very late – it has reflected on all this: and now the world of experience and the thing in itself seem to it so extraordinarily different from one another and divided apart that it rejects the idea that the nature of one can be inferred from the nature of the other" (MA I, KSA 2, 37). Moreover, the world of phenomena is an „inherited idea, spun out of intellectual errors" (ibid.). This way of treating this problematic relationship between the appearances and the thing in itself directly leads to a possible solution, since if one admits that the world we know is a mere product of our intellect generated during the development of the species, then a genealogical analysis can easily show its inner lack of content. Nietzsche indeed goes on by stating that „with all these conceptions the steady and laborious process of science, which will one day celebrate its greatest triumph in a *history of the genesis of thought*, will in the end decisively have done; for the outcome of this history may well be the conclusion: that which we now call the world is the outcome of a host of errors and fantasies which have gradually arisen and grown entwined with one another in the course of the overall evolution of the organic being, and are now inherited by us as the accumulated treasure of the entire past – as a treasure: for the value of our humanity depends upon it" (ibid.).[27]

The view of human knowledge that Nietzsche presents in *Human, all too Human* is the ground of his later criticism towards the notion of truth, and more widely towards the Western metaphysics. His statements indeed concern the metaphysical realm of absolute and unchanging concepts, that realm that he will later call ‚true world'. In this realm we find all the ‚eternal idols', the hypostatized world-schemes that our intellect created, and that are commonly seen as a „criterion of truth and reality", instead of mere „means toward the adjustment of the world for utilitarian ends" (NL 14 [153], KSA 13, 336). In MA Nietzsche detects the reason of this mistake in our language, in its being an essential tool for us, in order to orient ourself to the world and make it manageable. In that book Nietzsche indeed writes that „the shaper of language was not so modest as to think that he was only giving things labels; rather, he imagined that he was expressing the highest knowledge of things with words; and in fact, language is the first stage of scientific effort" (MA I, KSA, 2, 30 f.). This statement is coherent with the note from 1888 quoted above, and confirms Nietzsche's idea that the rejection of the metaphysical worldview only involves our belief in the absolute value of our knowledge, and not our use of it for practical purposes. As I briefly pointed out earlier, Nietzsche is well aware that our intellect's fallibility is physiological, and therefore that the human beings cannot live without referring to the intellectual ‚errors' (see e. g. MA I, KSA 2, 9). Thus, according to him, the plane of fixed, unchanging shapes (thoughts, symbols, bodies, subjects, and things)

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[27] In order to stress even more the similarity between Nietzsche's and Mach's view of truth, it should be noted that they both carried on a biological theory of knowledge. See on this topic Milič Čapek, *Ernst Mach's Biological Theory of Knowledge*, in: *Synthese,* 18/2–3 (1968), 171–191, and Pietro Gori, *Il meccanicismo metafisico,* Chapter 1.

must not be completely rejected, and we can look at it as a temporarily reference for our world-description and world-interpretation. That can be done only by changing the traditional philosophical perspective, and becoming historians, as Nietzsche points out in a note from 1885: „What distinguishes us in the deepest way from all the Platonic and Leibnitzean way of thinking, is this: we do not believe in eternal concepts, eternal values, eternal shapes, eternal souls; and philosophy, as far as it is science and not legislation, is for us just the broadest extension of the concept of ‚history'" (NL 38 [14], KSA 11, 613).[28]

Nietzsche's dealing with the categories of reason is therefore very similar to Mach's view of the scientific notions. The characters of these notions are basically the same as that of human ‚truths': they both have indeed a mere relative and historical value, but they are so useful for us, that it is not possible to live (or work) without them. This practical usefulness is what avoids the nihilistic drift of this relativistic view. Since both the human truths and the scientific notions make the world manageable, their being relative does not lead to an indifferentism according to which it is not possible to choose any option, since their truth-value is the same. Our need of reference points for our agency (on the scientific side: the researcher's need of reference points for his world-description) forces us to find a criterion of truth. Since there is no reference out of the plane of the human knowledge (there is no dualism between the ‚apparent' and the ‚true' world anymore), this criterion must be found on that plane itself. This criterion, as we saw above, is a utilitarian one, and that leads to a pragmatic view of truth. As I tried to show by stressing the parallelism between the philosophical and the scientific views, this is true both for Nietzsche and for the scientists who accept Mach's principles. Moreover, this is true for James, whose pragmatism is explicitly grounded on the historical description of the scientific investigation.

III. ‚Denkmittel' and common sense: William James on truth

James' pragmatism is strictly related with Machian empiricism and his epistemological views[29]. James' theory of truth, in particular, follows from the scientific worldview of the late 19th century, and can be evaluated as an attempt to answer to the crisis of contemporary science. In what follows I shall argue that the several similarities between James' view of truth and that of Nietzsche can be understood in the light of that context. Even though

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28 This exhortation to develop a ‚historical philosophy' recalls the opening of MA, where Nietzsche complains the „lack of historical sense" of the philosophers (MA, KSA 2, 24). The same complaining is later repeated in GD, where Nietzsche stresses the importance of looking at the concept of reason as mere tools to manage the world, and deplores the inability of the philosophers to see human knowledge as part of a still becoming process (GD, KSA, 6, 74). I dealt with Nietzsche's reference to history as tool to enlighten the hollowness of the idols in Pietro Gori, *„Sounding Out Idols". Knowledge, History and Metaphysics in* Human, All Too Human *and* Twilight of the Idols, in: *Nietzscheforschung*, 16 (2009), 239–247.

29 See e. g. Gerald Holton, *From the Vienna Circle to Harvard Square: The Americanization of a European World Conception*, in: Friedrich Stadler (ed.), *Scientific Philosophy: Origins and Development*, Dordrecht, Boston, London 1993, 47–73. James explicitly mentions Mach and his school both in *Pragmatism* (32 and 89) and in *The Meaning of Truth* (MT 178), but several of his statements are clearly references to Mach's ideas. I will later deal with some of them.

Nietzsche never refers to the same authors quoted by James (e. g. Henri Poincaré, Pierre Duhem, Wilhelm Ostwald), beyond his theory of knowledge we find people to whose out-comes these authors themselves made reference.[30] Moreover, as I argued in the previous section, Nietzsche's theory of knowledge is comparable with Mach's epistemology. Even though we cannot take Mach as a common source between James and Nietzsche, that simi-larity can anyway be the sign of a shared view of epistemological questions.

The starting point of James' dealing with truth is the rejection of the ‚correspondence theory‘, i. e. the idea that truth expresses what reality is in itself.[31] In the opening of his lecture on *Pragmatism's Conception of Truth*, James contrasts „the popular notion that a true idea must copy its reality", and reject this claim as a bad interpretation provided by the intellectualists of the definition of truth as ‚agreement‘ with ‚reality‘ (P, 92 f.).[32] James' thesis, on the contrary, is that truth cannot be considered as a ‚static‘ predicate of things, but rather as a becoming property of them. According to him „the truth of an idea is not a stagnant property inherent in it. Truth *happens* to an idea. It *becomes* true, is *made* true by events. Its verity is in fact an event, a process: the process namely of its verify-ing itself, its veri-*fication*" (P, 93). This idea that „truth is simply a collective name for verification-processes" (P, 101) can be compared with some Nietzsche's statements on truth, and actually follows from a quite similar view of the truth-value of the ‚facts‘. That is particularly clear if we just consider this excerpt from Nietzsche's *Nachlass*: „Truth is not something that's there and must be found out, discovered, but something *that must be made* and that provides the name for a *process* – or rather for a will to overcome, a will that left to itself has no end: inserting truth as a processus in infinitum, an *active deter-mining*, *not* a becoming conscious of something that is ‚in itself‘ fixed and determinate" (NL 9 [91], KSA 12, 385). The ground idea of this view, that both Nietzsche and James state, is the inexistence of a thing in itself to which we can refer, in order to provide a description of the world. More precisely, if a thing in itself exists (they both never reject its existence, but only its theoretical value!), it is neither ‚true‘ nor ‚false‘. Reality have indeed no truth value in itself, and the facts only acquire truthfulness from us, from our knowledge of them. In a way very similar to Nietzsche's well known statement according to which there are no facts, but only interpretations (NL 7 [60], ibid., 315), James argues that „the ‚facts‘ themselves are not *true*. They simply *are*", and furthermore „truth is the function of the beliefs that start and terminate among them" (P, 104).[33]

It is notably that this idea arises from a very Machian remark, a sensualist account that Nietzsche (apparently) shares, too. James indeed argues that „the *first* part of reality […] is the flux of our sensations. Sensations are forced upon us, coming we know not whence.

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30   That is very similar to what happens in the case of Nietzsche's affinity with Mach's view, since that can be only understood by referring to the scientific debate they both referred to. See Pietro Gori, *The Usefulness of Substances*, 112 ff.

31   See Kai-Michael Hingst, *Nietzsche Pragmaticus*, 293 ff.

32   In this section I will use the following abbreviations for the two works of James that I will chiefly quote: P = *Pragmatism. A New Name for some Old Ways of Thinking;* MT = *The Meaning of Truth*. I quote from *Pragmatism & The Meaning of Truth*, Seaside 2011.

33   In MT the same claim is stated with reference to reality: „Realities are not *true*, they *are*; and beliefs are true *of* them" (MT 233). Rossella Fabbrichesi stressed the similarity between James' theory of truth and Nietzsche's perspectivism in her paper on *Nietzsche and James*, 26 ff.

Over their nature, order, and quantity we have as good as no control. *They* are neither true nor false; they simply *are*. It is only what we say about them, only the names we give them, our theories of their source and nature and remote relations, that may be true or not" (P, 112). That is exactly one of the basic topics with which Mach deals in his *Analysis of Sensations*, and that can be compared with Nietzsche's late view.[34] In GD Nietzsche indeed states that senses „do not lie at all", and goes on by claming that „what we *do* with the testimony of the senses, is where the lies begin. […] ‚Reason' makes us falsify the testimony of the senses" (GD, KSA 6, 75).[35] This statement concerns the interpreting role of human knowledge, its adding something to a theoretically ‚neutral' element. That is what also James argues, when he quotes Ferdinand Schiller's Humanism and his idea that „our truths are a man-made product" (P, 111),[36] or in stating that „in our cognitive as well as in our active life we are creative. We *add*, both to the subject and to the predicate part of reality" (P, 118). In so doing, James stresses the necessity of focusing to the human side of knowledge in order to talk about truth, to that ‚apparent world' whose role of exclusive reference point of our world-description Nietzsche emphasizes in *Twilight of the Idols*.

The reference to GD can be further stressed, since in the opening of the lecture on *Pragmatism and Humanism* where James deals with the perspectival character of truth, we find some claims concerning the rationalistic view on truth (which James is aimed at contrasting) that are comparable with Nietzsche's late critique to the ‚prejudices of reason'. „The notion of *the* truth, conceived as the one answer, determinate and complete, to the one fixed enigma which the world is believed to propound", is defined by James as

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[34] On Nietzsche's sensualism, and its relationship with Mach's view, see Pietro Gori, *The usefulness of substances*, 114 ff. and 123 ff.; Nadeem Hussain, *Reading Nietzsche through Ernst Mach*; id., *Nietzsche's Positivism*, in: *European Journal of Philosophy*, 12/3 (2004), 326–368.

[35] Nietzsche's positive attitude towards sensualism is also expressed in JGB 15 and FW 272. See on this topic Robin Small, *Nietzsche in Context*, Aldershot 2001, Chapter 9.

[36] The name of Schiller deserves a short digression. In 1982 George Stack dealt with Nietzsche's influence on Pragmatic Humanism, and suggested that some fundamental statements of Schiller could not have been completely original. Stack noticed the influence that Nietzsche had on Schiller, and stressed the almost totally absence of explicit references to Nietzsche in the latter's work. The main outcome of Stack's investigation is that Nietzsche is probably a direct (but hidden) source of Schiller, and therefore his Humanism is grounded on a pure Nietzschean ground (see George Stack, *Nietzsche's Influence on Pragmatic Humanism*, in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 20/4 (1982), 339–358). If Stack is right, that shed a new light on our research. We should indeed evaluate Nietzsche's role in the development of James' theory of truth, and not just consider the similarity between their views. If we follow Kleinpeter's view, according to which „in defining the notion of truth, Nietzsche completely agrees with Pragmatism" of both James and Schiller (Hans Kleinpeter, *Die Erkenntnislehre Friedrich Nietzsches,* in: *Wissenschaftliche Rundschau,* 3 (1912), 9), our basic assumption is that the two pragmatists developed their own views independently from Nietzsche's theory of knowledge. On the contrary, if Schiller assimilated some of Nietzsche's ideas, and James makes reference to Schiller in developing his pragmatism, then Nietzsche could have played a role in James' philosophy, even if an indirect and quite limited one. Moreover, what is notably here is that Schiller is most probably the person who suggested to Kleinpeter that Nietzsche's theory of knowledge was comparable to the modern epistemology, and to pragmatism itself. It is a fact that Kleinpeter started dealing with Nietzsche only in 1911, after the International Congress of Philosophy held in Bologna, when he first met Schiller (see Pietro Gori, *Drei Briefe von Hans Kleinpeter an Ernst Mach*, in: *Nietzsche-Studien*, 40 (2011), 290).

a „*typical idol of the tribe*" (P, 110, my emphasis in the last part of the quotation). More-over, he argues that „by amateurs in philosophy and professional alike, the universe is represented as a queer sort of petrified sphinx whose appeal to man consists in a monoto-nous challenge to his divining powers. *The* truth: what a perfect idol of the rationalistic mind!" (ibid.). With all likelihood, in talking about ‚idol of the tribe' James simply quotes Bacon's *idola tribus*, but his view on truth is nevertheless comparable with Nietzsche's late statements. The eternal idols Nietzsche deals with in GD are exactly those old truths that constituted the metaphysical realm, the reference points of the Western worldview. Moreover, Nietzsche's idols are peculiar to the ‚philosopher's idiosyncrasy', and have been generated by those philosophers' having trusted in the „prejudices of reason" (GD, KSA 6, 74 ff.). Finally, as I argued in the previous section, Nietzsche's idols are the hu-man beliefs that have lost their historical character; concepts developed during the long (both biological and cultural) history of the human being, and that are now seen as fixed, immutable, non-becoming attributes of the world.

From what I showed until now, it is arguable that James' view is in compliance with the theoretical disorientation peculiar to the late 19th century both scientific and philo-sophical worldview, which followed from the discover of the inadequacy of the tradition-ally adopted reference points. Let's now see how deeply his pragmatism is connected with contemporary epistemology. According to James, truth is something that does not belong to things. There is nothing to discover, and what we can define in terms of true and false is only a human view of reality, his interpretation of it. The role played by the concepts in this picture follows explicitly from the main outcome of Mach and his school (e. g. Duhem and Ostwald). „All our conceptions are what the Germans call *Denkmit-tel*, means by which we handle facts by thinking them. Experience as such doesn't come ticketed and labelled, we have first to discover what it is" (P, 81). These *Denkmittel* can easily be Mach's *Gedankensymbol*, as much as Nietzsche's labels, whose usefulness is merely practical, since they make the world manageable. James calls indeed the concepts „artificial short-cuts for tacking us from one part to another of experience's flux", and – with clear reference to Mach – „sovereign triumph of economy in thought" (P, 89).

The similarity with Nietzsche's view is not limited to that, and concerns the relation-ship between these *Denkmittel* and our ‚common sense'. James indeed states that the *Denkmittel* have become the ground concepts of our common worldview, since they were useful, and played a fundamental role in the development of the human race. Moreover, James defines the ‚common sense' as „a perfect definite stage in our understanding of things, a stage that satisfies in an extraordinarily successful way the purposes for which we think" (P, 85). What forms this „great stage of equilibrium in the human mind's de-velopment" are „*our fundamental ways of thinking about things*", which are „*discoveries of exceedingly remote ancestors, which have been able to preserve themselves through the experience of all subsequent time*" (P, 80). James argues this, and then adds: „We are now so familiar with the order that these notions have woven for us out of the everlasting weather of our perceptions that we find it hard to realize how little of a fixed routine the perceptions follow when taken by themselves".[37] Here, again, James' view is very close

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37   See also MT 177: „Experience is a process that continually gives us new material to digest. We
      handle this intellectually by the mass of beliefs of which we find ourselves already possessed, as-

to that of Nietzsche. Let me just recall FW 110, where Nietzsche deals with the adaptive role of human knowledge, and states that some errors produced by our intellect „through immense periods of time […] turned out to be useful and species-preserving […]. Such erroneous articles of faith, which were passed on by in inheritance further and further, and finally almost became part of the basic endowment of the species, are for example: that there are enduring things; that there are identical things; that there are things, kinds of material, bodies; that a thing is what it appears to be; that our will is free; that what is good for me is good in and for itself" (FW, KSA 3, 469).[38] In the light of what I stated in the previous sections, I believe that the similarity between James and Nietzsche on this topic is self-evident.[39]

James explicitly reveals his epistemological ground at the end of his lecture on *Pragmatism and Common Sense*, where he shows as possible outcome of 20th century philosophy the enlightenment of the pure practical value of the common-sense concepts. First, he deals with the „*naïf* conception of things", and argues that it can get „superseded, and a thing's name [can be] interpreted as denoting only the law or *Regel der Verbindung* by which certain of our sensations habitually succeed or coexist" (P, 87).[40] Moreover, he goes on in claming that „science and critical philosophy burst the boundaries of common sense" (ibid.). Then, James states, with a pure Nietzschean language: „Scientific logicians are saying on every hand that these entities and their determinations, however definitely conceived, should not be held for literally real. It is *as if* they existed; but in reality they are like co-ordinates or logarithms, only artificial short-cuts for taking us from one part to another of experience's flux. […] Just now, if I understand the matter rightly, we are witnessing a curious reversion of the common-sense way of looking at physical nature, in the philosophy of science favoured by such men as Mach, Ostwald and Duhem. According to these teachers no hypothesis is truer than any other in the sense of being a more literary copy of reality. They are all but ways of talking on our part, to be compared solely from the point of view of their *use*" (P, 89). According to James, the late 19th century epistemology contributed in changing the basic elements of our worldview. In so doing, it undermined that view, in fact. The outcomes of Mach's, Duhem's, and Ostwald's investigations force us to find a new perspective, in order to give value to our practical need to handle the world. Our evaluation of it, in both a theoretical and a moral sense,

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similating, rejecting, or rearranging in different degrees. Some of the apperceiving ideas are recent acquisitions of our own, but most of them are common-sense traditions of the race. […] All these were once definite conquests made at historic dates by our ancestors in their attempt to get the chaos of their crude individual experiences into a more shareable and manageable shape. They proved of such sovereign use as *Denkmittel* that they are now a part of the very structure of our mind".

[38] According to James, the most important concepts inherited, and which now form the common-sense belief, are: „thing; the same or different; kinds; minds; bodies; one time; one space; subjects and attributes; causal influence; the fancied; the real" (P, 81).

[39] I'd like to say the same with regards to Mach, who also shares a biological and evolutionary view of human knowledge. Unfortunately I had no space do develop this topic in the previous section, and now I can only refer to the same studies I quoted above (see footnote 27).

[40] Here, again, we find an implicit reference to Mach. In James' view that should most likely be self-evident – at least, to anyone who knows Mach's basic writings, as he did (see Gerald Holton, *From the Vienna Circle to Harvard Square*, 50 f., and Massimo Ferrari, *Well, and Pragmatism?*, in: Friedrich Stadler (ed.), *The Present Situation in the Philosophy of Science*. Vienna 2010, 78).

cannot be grounded on the possibility of discovering the character of things; we rather must consider our creative attitude to them, and thus define a new criterion of truth.

Before coming to what follows from that all, i. e. James' definition of the ‚pragmatic method', let me briefly explain my previous reference to the Nietzschean language. The last excerpt from James' *Pragmatism* can indeed be compared with those writings in which Nietzsche refers to his contemporaries, and argues that the development of both logic and physics would lead to a new evaluation of the explanatory power of science. In the first book of *Beyond Good and Evil*, for example, Nietzsche deals with the prejudices of philosophers, and focuses on some outcomes of the scientific worldview. He particularly contrasts the mechanistic view grounded on the belief in material things (e. g. JGB, Aph. 12 and 17), and then argues that „now it is beginning to dawn on maybe five or six brains that physics too is only an interpretation and arrangement of the world […] and *not* an explanation of the world" (JGB, KSA 5, 28). This ‚dawning' (which recalls the same dawning „on man that in their belief in language they propagated a tremendous error" stated in MA I, KSA 2, 31) is Nietzsche's word for the change that he founds out in 19th century thought. A change that he believes not to be purely theoretical, but which can also have a transformative power on human life.

The interpretation of common-sense concepts as *Denkmittel*, and the refusal of the correspondence theory (both in compliance with the outcomes of 19th century epistemology), are the grounds of James' ‚pragmatic method'. Since there is no Truth to refer to, nothing that we can simply discover into things, James suggests to pay attention to the practical plane, and more precisely to the effects that *our believing something to be true* has on our life. „Pragmatism asks its usual question. ‚Grant an idea of belief to be true', it says, ‚what concrete difference will its being true making in anyone's actual life? How will the truth be realized? What experiences will be different from those which could obtain if the belief were false? What, in short, is the truth's cash-value in experiential terms?'" (P, 93). As Rossella Fabbrichesi sums up, James argues that „a belief *counts* as true when it *satisfies* us, it *pays*, also, in the cash-value of the word, it *gratifies* us, is *held as* true, proves itself *useful* if considered true, *functions* in orienting us along the road of research, that is, is *advantageous* as related to our vital power".[41] James thus focuses on the human being. His view in fact shifts from the known reality to the knowing subject, and James particularly stresses the practical plane of human agency. In so doing, he shares Nietzsche's view, according to which both our theoretical and moral evaluations belong to the interpretative plane. ‚True' and ‚false' – as much as ‚good' and ‚bad' – are only „levels of appearance and, as it were, lighter and darker shades and tones of appearance" (JGB, KSA 5, 14). James' pragmatisms can be therefore compared with that of Nietzsche, and we can particularly stress the interest in human agency which characterizes them. Both the thinkers start indeed from the same epistemological principles, and find in the practical usefulness of our knowledge a criterion of truth. But this usefulness can be understood in many ways, and the reference to human life that we find in Nietzsche's writings may be different to that of James. As I shall argue in the next and final section, Nietzsche's ‚pragmatism' goes beyond a mere utilitarian principle, and involves a modification of human life itself. What is ‚true', in Nietzsche's view, is something that can have

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[41]   Rossella Fabbrichesi, *Nietzsche and James*, 31.

a transformative effect on the human being, i. e. whose ‚cash-value‘ must be evaluated not only in experiential, but also (and chiefly) in existential terms.

IV. Nietzsche's ‚pragmatism‘

In the first section of this paper I quoted the note 14 [153] from 1888, which I find particularly clear in displaying the ground of Nietzsche's ‚pragmatism‘. In that text, Nietzsche defines the categories of reason as „means toward the adjustment of the world for utilitarian ends (basically, toward an expedient falsification)“, and complains the philosophers' belief of possessing „in them the criterion of truth and reality. The ‚criterion of truth‘“ – Nietzsche goes on – „was in fact merely the biological utility of such a system of systematic falsification; and since a species of animal knows of nothing more important than its own preservation, one might indeed be permitted to speak here of ‚truth‘“. According to this excerpt, Nietzsche accepts James' pragmatic method. He indeed states that to speak of ‚truth‘ it is permitted, if we make reference to a useful knowledge – a knowledge that has a significant cash-value. Nietzsche here holds a biological perspective, and talks about ‚truth‘ as that falsification which permitted the conservation of the species. As I argued in the first section, Nietzsche is interested in the highest cash-value for us – our own life preservation – but we can take a general criterion of truth out of his statements on the adaptive role of knowledge. In that note from 1888 Nietzsche argues that *there can be* something one calls ‚true‘; what is there concerned is in fact only the *kind* of ‚truth‘ one can talk about. That must be stressed, since most of the time Nietzsche's relativism is interpreted in a nihilistic way, as if he stated that there can be no truth at all. On the contrary, his perspectivism – the idea that all the world-desscriptions, being only interpretations, in principle have the same truth-value, and it is not possible to evaluate them on the metaphysical plane – does not lead to an indifferentism. Nietzsche's rejection of the ‚true world‘ indeed leaves the space for a *new* definition of both ‚true‘ and ‚false‘. He never rejects the possibility of that definition: he rather only limits the plane into which we can evaluate true and false, and shows us the criterion of that evaluation. The plane is that of our world-interpretation, and we can sum up Nietzsche's view in that way: we cannot know anything in itself, anything unconditioned (since we condition what we know); thus, it's extremely highly probable that our knowledge does not correspond to reality; thus, our evaluation of true and false must be in terms of ‚more or less false‘. Moreover, that ‚more or less‘ must not be understood in terms of the correspondence theory (that is what Nietzsche first rejects), and the criterion of truth of the late Nietzsche is therefore the usefulness of knowledge for our practical life, i. e. a concept will be ‚truer‘ inasmuch as it helps human orientation.

   That view is open to the objection according to which in rejecting the old criterion of truth Nietzsche replaces it with another one – his own.[42] Someone can thus ask: isn't the old criterion as arguable as Nietzsche's perspectivism? Even though on the theoreti-

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[42]   Maudemarie Clark assumes „that Nietzsche claims superiority for his own perspective“ in her *Nietzsche of Truth and Philosophy*, 140 f. See also Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche's Metaethics: Against the Privilege Readings*, in: *European Journal of Philosophy*, 8/3 (2000), 277–297.

cal plane the answer to that question is ‚yes, it is!‘, the things change if we look at them from Nietzsche's perspective. More precisely, my suggestion is to look at Nietzsche's perspectivism in the light of his ‚pragmatism‘ itself, with particular reference to the aim of his later writings. During his last years of thought, Nietzsche focused on a diagnosis of his era, with particular reference to the type of man generated by the Western metaphysics: the 19th century European. As we all know, one of Nietzsche's most important contribution to philosophy has been his having traced the genealogical development of our culture, and thus shown the seeds of our attitude towards both the world and ourselves. In few words, Nietzsche sees in the belief in a ‚true world‘ the basis of the *décadence*, of the declining type of life peculiar to the 19th century Europe.[43] The philosopher's „lack of historical sense“, their having „turned into a mummy“ our concepts (GD, KSA 6, 74); moreover, their having mistaken a mere falsification for the knowledge of reality in itself (NL 14 [153], KSA 13, 336 ff.) generated a metaphysical worldview, full of ‚eternal idols‘ to which both our knowledge and our agency must comply. Nietzsche's alternative is to reject the absolute value of these idols – the old truths – to hit them with the hammer of history, and therefore show their inner becoming nature. The idea that any truth is relative is therefore the basis for a new worldview, from which follows another human type. Here we find the transformative value of Nietzsche's perspectivism, since in his view a man who holds this theory of truth will act in a different way, and thus become a ‚higher‘ human being, compared to the declining one of the late 19th century Europe. We can evaluate this as the ‚cash-value‘ of Nietzsche's perspectivism, and thus consider his view of truth as involved in the same pragmatic method that rises from it. That view is not ‚truer‘ than the old one, at least not in terms of the correspondence theory. It is not true at all, in fact, and Nietzsche never claims it to be. Nietzsche's perspectivism is as relative as any other theory of truth. It simply is a worldview alternative to the old one, whose effects on the human being are therefore different. What can let us choose it (as more useful, as having a higher ‚cash-value‘ – i. e. as being ‚truer‘ in a pragmatic sense) are exactly these effects, and nothing more.

That is what really interested Nietzsche. According to him, one of the fundamental questions of philosophy (maybe the basic one) is not ‚What is truth?‘, but rather ‚What do we do with *our* truths?‘, ‚Which are the *effects* of our truths *on us*?‘. Nietzsche thus modifies the core of the old worldview, which was grounded on the first of these questions, on the belief that there was one absolute Truth, and that it could be discovered. Nietzsche rejects that metaphysical principle, but in so doing he only criticizes the character that we traditionally attribute to truth. If we closely consider his criticism towards truth, we never find the rejection of it as tool for the human being's orientation. Nietzsche indeed never thought that we could live and act without referring points; during his whole life he just stressed that these referring points are not absolute and unchanging. His heavy attack against the Western metaphysics is thus aimed at finding an alternative way to the nihilistic drift of 19th century Europe. That way starts from the detection of the relative value of the old truths, without involving a rejection of their usefulness. Nietzsche's pragmatism is therefore necessarily related to his perspectivism, and that must be stressed in order to contrast the interpretations of his thought which make him a relativist in the negative

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43   GD is basically devoted to that topic.

sense of this word. In a way similar to James, Nietzsche finds in the evaluation of the practical effect of a concept the tool to give to the human being the referring points that he needs in order to live. Both Nietzsche and James react to the 19th century crisis that involved the whole European culture, and they both find a way to avoid the danger of a complete disorientation. In so doing, Nietzsche and James follow the example of the new epistemology, which was aimed at helping science in carrying on its task of providing a highly explanatory world-description. Even though thinkers such as Mach revealed the relative value of the scientific notions, they still needed a criterion to evaluate the result of their researches, in order to avoid the whole building's collapse. That is exactly what we can find beneath Nietzsche's theory of knowledge, and that is why we can talk about pragmatism in referring to it.

As a conclusion, let me just stress that the difference between Nietzsche's pragmatism and that of James can be evaluated in their interest in human life. The aims of these thinkers are different: while James is primarily a scientist, and thus shows interest for the purely theoretical side of the theory of truth (which, then, has important consequences on the practical plane), Nietzsche is chiefly interested in the effect that a worldview can have on the human being. We must therefore refer to the existential plane, in order to assess the truth-value of a worldview: the ‚truer' one – that which we should assume as ground of our agency – is the worldview which helps us becoming ‚who we are', and thus makes possible the development of a higher type of man.