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Nietzsche's Perspectivism as an Epistemological and Meta-Ethical Position

1 Different interpretations of Nietzsche's perspectivism and philosophy

In the literature, Nietzsche's perspectivism is usually interpreted as a theory of truth, an "epistemological position",¹ or as his "attempt to give an account of how knowledge of the world is (or is not) possible".² However, within the recent literature it has been claimed that it is fundamentally dubious to reconstruct "Nietzsche's perspectivism" as an epistemological position or theory.³ Against this view, I will argue that Nietzsche's writings do contain an epistemological position or theory that deserves the name "perspectivism". Nevertheless, perspectivism should not be reduced to an epistemic or epistemological position as most interpreters and handbooks do.⁴ Against such

1 Brian Leiter, *Perspectivism in Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals*, in: Richard Schacht (ed.), *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality. Essays on Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals*, London 1994, 334–357, 351. Lanier Anderson characterizes perspectivism as a "theory of epistemology"; Lanier Anderson, *Truth and Objectivity in Perspectivism*, in: *Synthese*, 115/1 (1998), 1–32; here: 7.

2 Tracy B. Strong, *Text and Pretexs: Reflections on Perspectivism in Nietzsche*, in: *Political Theory*, 13/2 (1985), 164–182; here: 164.

3 Jakob Dellinger, 'Du sollst das Perspektivische in jeder Werthschätzung begreifen lernen'. Zum Problem des Perspektivischen in der Vorrede zu *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches I*, in: *Nietzsche-Studien*, 44 (2015), 340–379; here: 341. Dellinger presents a sophisticated analysis of the context and self-referential narrative structure of Nietzsche's statements about "the perspectival" in HH I, Preface 6. From this he concludes that it is "extremely problematic" (*äußerst problematisch*) to quote these statements as Nietzsche's teaching or as a theory called "perspectivism"; Jakob Dellinger, 'Du sollst das Perspektivische in jeder Werthschätzung begreifen lernen', 376; for a similar rejection of interpretations which claim that Nietzsche's perspectivism is a teaching or a theory see Enrico Müller, *Nietzsche-Lexikon* (UTB 1515), Paderborn 2020, 205, 208 f. Dellinger's conclusion is not convincing because Nietzsche repeats most statements of the preface in other passages of his published works as his own ones (e.g. in BGE Preface, BGE 34, and GM III 12). Expressions such as "the problem of *order of rank*" are recurring topoi of Nietzsche's thought. Therefore, these statements and expressions should be attributed to him as author. This claim does not deny "Nietzsche's literary implementation of the perspectival attitude in his texts" (Enrico Müller, *Nietzsche-Lexikon*, 208 [my trans.]). A detailed engagement with the arguments of Dellinger's interpretations and the new "textist" paradigm of Nietzsche studies, represented mostly by literary theorists or Germanists, is not possible within the context of this article and remains a desideratum.

4 See the otherwise excellent handbook articles of Jakob Dellinger, *Perspektivismus*, in: Christian Niemeyer (ed.), *Nietzsche-Lexikon* (second edition), Darmstadt 2011, 288 f., Enrico Müller, *Nietzsche-Lexikon*, 204–209, and Claus Zittel, *Perspektivismus*, in: Henning Ottmann (ed.), *Nietzsche Handbuch. Leben – Werk – Wirkung*, Stuttgart 2000/2011, 299–301.

reductionist views, I argue that Nietzsche's perspectivism is also a meta-ethical position.⁵ As a meta-ethical position, perspectivism characterizes Nietzsche's version of moral skepticism (and expressivism) which assumes value pluralism and aims at new values and an order of rank of values. As an epistemological position, perspectivism provides a hermeneutic method that allows the human animal to achieve knowledge and truth despite the death of God, the biological theory of descent, and the demise of metaphysics. This kind of knowledge is different from traditional metaphysical claims to knowledge about the thing-in-itself or the essence of the world, which has been interpreted as air, atoms, *eidōs*, *morphê*, *Geist*, will, and such like. Nietzsche aims at a form of knowledge and truth of a more modest sort: about the human being, reason, language, philosophy, history, politics, religion, and morality. These are among the main subjects Nietzsche himself has been investigating throughout his career in the 1870s and 1880s. In his published works he offers numerous interpretations of these subjects that are either based on previous interpretations or he rejects them and claims to present more adequate ones. Any interpretation of Nietzsche's epistemological position must take his own cognitive practices as a philosopher into account.

Nietzsche first introduces perspective-language in the 1882 first edition of *The Gay Science*.⁶ In *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* it is absent. The most relevant passages only occur starting with *Beyond Good and Evil*, which appeared in 1886.⁷ My interpretations give preference to the passages in Nietzsche's published works because it is not clear which ones from his notebooks were meant for publication. Nietzsche's perspectivism as an epistemological position is closely connected to other topics of his work such as his conceptions of truth, interpretation, and the will to power.

Nietzsche's epistemological position is a disputed issue in the literature. According to the recent debate, there is a fundamental division among scholars that goes along with two opposing paradigms of Nietzsche-interpretation. For some research-

⁵ However, Nietzsche not only defends a meta-ethical position but also a position best characterized in German as a "moralkritische Position". Some interpreters have noticed the ethical dimension of Nietzsche's perspectivism, but stopped short of exploring it. According to Richard Schacht, in the passage on "the perspectival" in the preface to BGE Nietzsche is advancing a "thesis" about "*the perspectival character of value*" (Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche and the Perspectival*, in: *Philosophical Topics*, 33/2 (2005), 193–225, 200 f.). Maudemarie Clark observes that "Nietzsche also characterizes values as perspectival" (Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, Cambridge 1990, 127). For some thoughts on Nietzsche's "moral perspectivism", see Robert C. Welshon, *Nietzsche's Peculiar Virtues and the Health of the Soul*, in: *International Studies in Philosophy*, 24 (1992), 77–89. For an interpretation of perspectivism as an even broader phenomenon, see Ken Gemes, *Life's Perspectives*, in: Ken Gemes a. John Richardson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, Oxford 2013, 553–575.

⁶ In his article on perspectivism, Richard Schacht collects and interprets the occurrences of perspective-language and what comes close to it in *The Gay Science*: GS 78, 143, 162, 233, 299, 301 (Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche and the Perspectival*, 197–200).

⁷ BGE Preface, BGE 11 and BGE 34; HH I Preface 6; BT Preface; GS 354 and GS 374; GM III 12. The preface of BGE was written in 1885 and published in 1886. The new prefaces to BT and HH I were added in 1886. Book V of GS, which contains aphorisms 354 and 374, was added in 1887. GM appeared in 1887.

ers Nietzsche is a 'naturalist' who builds on the tradition of the sciences, while for others he is a 'postmodern' who is a literary-minded critic of science. It is far from clear what these two labels designate and how much they promote our understanding of Nietzsche.⁸ Brian Leiter introduced his 2002 book *Nietzsche on Morality* with a section headed "Nietzsche, naturalist or postmodernist?" Leiter distinguishes between methodological and substantive naturalism in philosophy. The latter is either an ontological or a semantic view while the former claims that philosophical inquiry "should be continuous with empirical inquiry in the sciences".⁹ Leiter argues that Nietzsche is a methodological naturalist and belongs "in the company of naturalists like Hume and Freud – that is, among, broadly speaking, *philosophers of human nature*".¹⁰ The naturalist Nietzsche strives for scientific knowledge and aims at a non-metaphysical understanding of man, reason, and life focusing on the body and its natural drives, instincts, and affects. Leiter names Richard Schacht, Ken Gemes, Craig Beam, and Maudemarie Clark as recent scholars who view Nietzsche as a naturalist and scientist.¹¹ Schacht talks about Nietzsche's "naturalistic epistemology" that interprets the "nature and scope of human knowledge" based on a "general understanding of man's nature and his relation to the world".¹² In this context, Schacht refers to Nietzsche's important statement that his task is to "translate the human being back into nature" (BGE 230, KSA 5, 169, my trans.; cf. GS 109). In *Nietzsche's Naturalism*, Christian Emden focuses on the question what Nietzsche means by this statement, which he holds to be "crucial to any understanding of Friedrich Nietzsche's philosophical thought".¹³ Emden's book focuses in particular on Nietzsche's engagement with the contemporary life sciences which all "subscribe to an evolutionary model of development, and

8 Helmut Heit shows how difficult it is to define 'naturalism' and criticizes the opposition of a 'naturalist' and a 'postmodern' Nietzsche: "I doubt that such philosophy-political practices of constructing straight alternatives do much more philosophical work than pigeonholing positions. They might encourage an eloquent form of 'sanitizing' Nietzsche, but they also obscure a proper understanding of Nietzsche's thought and tend to shift the debate about content to an argument about proper denominations"; Helmut Heit, *Naturalizing Perspectives. On the Epistemology of Nietzsche's Experimental Naturalizations*, in: *Nietzsche-Studien*, 45 (2016), 56–80; here: 61. In contrast to Heit, Matthew Meyer, who provides a detailed summary of the popular opposition of a 'naturalist' and a 'postmodern' Nietzsche, acknowledges the opposition and offers himself a naturalistic reading of Nietzsche (Matthew Meyer, *Reading Nietzsche through the Ancients. An Analysis of Becoming, Perspectivism, and the Principle of Non-Contradiction*, Boston a. Berlin 2014).

9 Brian Leiter, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Nietzsche on Morality*, London a. New York 2002, 3.

10 Brian Leiter, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Nietzsche on Morality*, 2 f. Leiter's book focuses on Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morality* and claims that Nietzsche gives a "naturalistic account of morality" (Brian Leiter, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Nietzsche on Morality*, 3).

11 Brian Leiter, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Nietzsche on Morality*, 2.

12 Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche*, London 1983, 52, 54, 56.

13 Christian Emden, *Nietzsche's Naturalism. Philosophy and the Life Sciences in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge 2014, 1.

conceive life as an exclusively biological phenomenon”.¹⁴ Despite the fact that all of these scholars talk about Nietzsche’s philosophical “naturalism”, they have different understandings of this term and of Nietzsche’s relation to the positive sciences.

According to Leiter, the ‘postmodern’ reading of Nietzsche has been dominant since the 1960s. As French scholars who represent it, he lists Foucault and Derrida, and for the Anglophone world Arthur Danto, Alexander Nehamas, and Richard Rorty.¹⁵ One could add Gilles Deleuze, Paul de Man, Sarah Kofman, and Gianni Vattimo. The postmodern Nietzsche criticizes the sciences that he understands merely as one out of many narratives and interpretative constructs. This Nietzsche is the one who argues against positivism that facts do not exist but only interpretations, and who claims that there is no truth (NL 7[60], KSA 12, 315 a. NL 2[108], KSA 12, 114). Therefore, according to the postmodern Nietzsche, we can gain no insights or truths about human nature and the human condition. While some interpreters, “like Christoph Cox, have sought to reconcile these two strands in Nietzsche’s thinking, others, such as Brian Leiter, have held them to be mutually exclusive”.¹⁶ However, the label ‘postmodernism’ has never been accepted by most of the philosophers to whom it is said to refer to, and who mostly work on different topics and issues.

Because of the difficulties and problems connected to these two labels, my interpretations of Nietzsche’s perspectivism do not primarily focus on the question whether Nietzsche should be categorized as a ‘naturalist’ or a ‘postmodern’. Rather, I hold the crucial question to be whether Nietzsche acknowledges or rejects the possibility of knowledge and truth. In particular, section 6 of this article shows that with his perspectivism Nietzsche also provides a hermeneutic method that allows the human animal to achieve knowledge and truth about the world.¹⁷ In line with this, I argue that Nietzsche does not forsake truth as the ‘postmodern’ Nietzsche allegedly does.

14 Christian Emden, *Nietzsche’s Naturalism*, 7.

15 Brian Leiter, *Routledge Philosophy Guidebook to Nietzsche on Morality*, 2. Danto has an analytic approach to Nietzsche that is usually not connected to postmodernism.

16 Matthew Meyer, *Reading Nietzsche through the Ancients*, 1.

17 In contrast, Volker Gerhardt erroneously claims that “the advantages of perspectivism” can only be of “practical nature”. For him, there are no theoretical reasons why we should prefer one perspective to another: “An increase of our knowledge does not take place” (Volker Gerhardt, *Die Perspektive des Perspektivismus*, in: *Nietzsche-Studien*, 18 (1989), 260–281, 272 f. [my trans.]). The position defended in this article has affinities with those of Maudemarie Clark, Brian Leiter, Richard Schacht, John Wilcox, *Truth and Value in Nietzsche*, Ann Arbor 1974, and Kenneth Westphal who argues that “Nietzsche is a cognitivist. By cognitivism, I mean the view that there are knowable truths about the world. [...] Further, cognitivism requires a correspondence theory of truth” (Kenneth R. Westphal, *Nietzsche’s Sting and the Possibility of Good Philosophy*, in: *International Studies in Philosophy*, 16/2 [1984], 71–90; here: 71; Kenneth R. Westphal, *Was Nietzsche a Cognitivist?*, in: *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 22/3 [1984], 343–363). Müller notices that Nietzsche developed a “radical hermeneutic” for which the “thought of perspectivity” is central (Enrico Müller, *Nietzsche-Lexikon*, 207, cf. 205 [my trans.]).

To better understand Nietzsche's epistemological position, we should distinguish between two versions of the traditional conception that defines truth as agreement of our views to the world.¹⁸ The strong version of the correspondence theory is linked to the traditional metaphysical efforts to discover the thing-in-itself or the essence of the world. Traditional metaphysical philosophy presupposes that reality is not what it seems to us but that "behind it" there is a more essential and "true" reality. For Aristotle, the main task of theoretical philosophy is to investigate the first and supreme "principles" (*archai*) and "causes" (*aitiai*) of all things (*Metaphysics* I and VI). Traditional metaphysics strives for knowledge that does not correspond to appearances but to the thing-in-itself or the essence of the world. For Hegel, the philosopher is able to achieve "absolute knowing" about the world which in its essence is *Geist*.¹⁹ In connection with his perspectivism, Nietzsche rejects not only the possibility that such kinds of "absolute knowledge" (BGE 16, KSA 5, 29) are attainable but also the ontological correlate that things-in-themselves exist independently of a knowing, that is interpreting, "subject".²⁰ However, this does not mean that he also refuses a weak

18 In line with this view, Maudemarie Clark distinguishes "a metaphysical from a common sense version of the correspondence theory" and takes Nietzsche "to reject only the former" (Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 31, cf. 40 f.). Usually, interpreters do not distinguish between a strong and a weak version of the correspondence theory, e.g. Rüdiger Grimm, *Nietzsche's Theory of Knowledge* (Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung 4), Berlin a. New York 1977, 43–65. According to Grimm, Nietzsche's criterion of truth is the "increase of the feeling of power" (*Steigerung des Machtgefühls*) (Rüdiger Grimm, *Nietzsche's Theory of Knowledge*, 18 f.). In chapter two of her book, Clark argues convincingly against interpretations which attribute to Nietzsche either a pragmatic or a coherence theory of truth. Clark argues for a development of Nietzsche's position on truth: In his early essay *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*, Nietzsche denies truth by presupposing and accepting the metaphysical version of the correspondence theory that defines truth as correspondence of views to things-in-themselves. As we cannot achieve such kind of knowledge, Nietzsche rejects truth as a metaphysical concept. Later on, he repudiates Schopenhauer's view that knowledge is representation and argues that the idea of things-in-themselves is incoherent. Nietzsche's "mature perspectivism gives him an alternative to the representational model of knowledge and thereby allows him to affirm the existence of truth while denying metaphysical truth" (Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 22, cf. 83 and Brian Leiter, *Perspectivism in Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals*, 335. In 1998, Clark discards her early account of perspectivism that understood it as "an a priori doctrine" and claims it is "an empirical doctrine" (Maudemarie Clark, *On Knowledge, Truth, and Value: Nietzsche's Debt to Schopenhauer and the Development of his Empiricism*, in: Christopher Janaway (ed.), *Willing and Nothingness: Schopenhauer as Nietzsche's Educator*, Oxford 1998, 37–78; here: 74 f.).

19 In *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, Heidegger's student Karl Löwith argues that a good part of Nietzsche's thought is directed against Hegel and Hegelianism (Karl Löwith, *From Hegel to Nietzsche: The Revolution in Nineteenth-Century Thought*, trans. by David E. Green, New York 1967 [first edition 1941]).

20 For reasons of space this article cannot discuss the question of whether Nietzsche holds an ontological position. Many scholars have argued that he defends a relational ontology according to which everything is what it is only in relation to something else (NL 14[93], KSA 13, 270 f.). For the literature, see Matthew Meyer, *Reading Nietzsche through the Ancients*, 6. Meyer himself defends the thesis that Nietzsche is committed to a relational ontology "following Heraclitean and Protagorean views". Meyer

and hermeneutic version of the correspondence theory that allows for knowledge about the world that we perceive and experience. Such kind of knowledge or truth is never absolute but always relative to the point of view or perspective of the interpreting mind. Nonetheless, different interpretations about the human being, reason, language, philosophy, history, politics, religion, and morality can not only be better or worse. They can also be true in the sense that they correspond adequately to the phenomenon they are aiming to understand.

2 Nietzsche's introduction of "the perspectival" in *Beyond Good and Evil*

In the short preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, dated June 1885 and written before most of the book,²¹ Nietzsche introduces "the perspectival" (*das Perspektivische*) in connection with a criticism of dogmatic philosophy and in particular of Plato's "invention" and "error" (*Irrthum*) of a "good in itself" and a "pure spirit" (*Erfindung [...] vom reinen Geiste*) (BGE Preface, KSA 5, 12). This is a first indication that Nietzsche's perspectivism is directed mainly against metaphysics and dogmatic philosophy and their claims to absolute knowledge and absolute truth.

For Plato, the *logistikon* is separated from the other parts of the soul and survives the death of the individual (*Republic* X 608c–611d). The *logistikon* and its "intelligence" (*nous*) are not only able to behold the good in itself and the other forms but are kindred to them (*Republic* VI 490b, X 611e). For Plato, the good in itself and the other forms constitute an "intelligible region" (*noëtos topos*) that exists separate from the human mind and the world human beings perceive with their senses (*Republic* VI 509d). In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche calls this "intelligible region" the "true world" and sketches the steps through which it finally became a "fable". Plato is an ethical realist and cognitivist who holds the good to be a moral fact or an objective moral reality about which moral knowledge can be achieved. By criticizing Plato, Nietzsche addresses the two main areas of his perspectivism, i. e. epistemology and meta-ethics, "To be sure, it meant standing truth on her head and denying the *perspectival*, the basic condition of all life [*das Perspektivische*, die Grundbedingung alles Lebens], when one spoke of spirit and the good as Plato did" (BGE Preface, KSA 5, 12, trans. by W. Kaufmann, slightly modified; cf. BT Preface 5). Despite the fact that starting with *Beyond Good and Evil* Nietzsche criticizes the "will to truth" (*Wille zur*

takes "Nietzsche's relational ontology to be the cornerstone of his thinking" (Matthew Meyer, *Reading Nietzsche through the Ancients*, 2, 6).

²¹ Cf. Andreas Urs Sommer, *Kommentar zu Nietzsches 'Jenseits von Gut und Böse'* (= Historischer und Kritischer Kommentar zu Friedrich Nietzsches Werken, ed. Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Bd. 5/1), Berlin a. Boston 2016, 73 f.

Wahrheit) and its value, he is well aware that this criticism is motivated by his own “intellectual conscience” and intellectual “honesty” (*Redlichkeit*) (GS 2, KSA 3, 373; BGE 227, KSA 5, 162).²² He even claims that his Zarathustra “is more truthful than any other thinker” and that Zarathustra’s teaching “is the only one that considers truthfulness to be the highest virtue” (EH Destiny 3, KSA 6, 367, trans. by J. Norman). Nietzsche’s criticism that Plato stood “truth on her head” implies that he is not forsaking truth as the ‘postmodern’ Nietzsche allegedly does.²³ Even as a free spirit Nietzsche holds on to the ideal of the “honesty of thought” (*Redlichkeit des Denkens*) (D 370, KSA 3, 244). With his writings he intends to present ‘his’ “insights” and “his truths” (GS 54, KSA 3, 416; EH Books 1, KSA 6, 298; cf. EH Destiny 1, KSA 6, 365).

From a traditional perspective that values truth highly, Nietzsche’s criticism that Plato stood truth on her head implies the philosophical necessity of another inversion. Nietzsche’s intention to do exactly this is demonstrated as early as 1870 when he designated his philosophy as a “reversed Platonism” (NL 7[156], KSA 7, 199). For Nietzsche, no “pure spirit” exists because he understands thinking as a “conduct” (*Verhalten*) of drives, affects, and passions to each other and therefore as a phenomenon inextricably linked to the body (GS 333, KSA 3, 559; BGE 36, KSA 5, 54). Human understanding is always related to these drives, affects, and passions and is therefore perspectival. No “pure” understanding is possible but only different interpretations of the world based on the perspectives of our drives, affects, and passions that struggle with each other for domination (cf. NL 7[60], KSA 12, 315). Likewise, for Nietzsche, no “good in itself” or absolute good exists, but only a pluralism of values and of conceptions of the good that depend on valuations or estimations and thus on “subjective” perspectives. For Nietzsche, moral facts and moral knowledge do not exist: “There are no moral phenomena at all, but only a moral interpretation of phenomena” (BGE 108, KSA 5, 92, trans. by W. Kaufmann; cf. BT Preface 4, KSA 1, 17, and GM III 16, KSA 5, 376). Nietzsche was an anti-realist and moral skeptic.²⁴

²² Cf. Manuel Knoll, *Nietzsches Kritik am Willen zum Wissen und die intellektuelle Tugend der Redlichkeit*, in: Günther Abel / Marco Brusotti / Helmut Heit (eds.), *Nietzsches Wissenschaftsphilosophie. Hintergründe, Wirkungen und Aktualität*, Berlin a. Boston 2012, 257–270.

²³ Nietzsche repeats the wording “to stand truth on her head”, and formulations close to it, a few times in his published works (e.g. GM III 24, KSA 5, 400; EH Book 1, KSA 6, 299).

²⁴ For the term “moral skeptic”, see John L. Mackie, *Ethics. Inventing Right and Wrong*, London 1977, 16–18. In *Nietzsche’s Naturalism*, Emden argues that Nietzsche’s “genealogy reaches beyond the traditional metaethical distinction between moral realism and an anti-realism about values” (Christian Emden, *Nietzsche’s Naturalism*, 3). For Emden, the “central concern” of Nietzsche’s philosophical naturalism, which “is perhaps best understood as a naturalized version of Kantian epistemology”, “is the problem of normativity”. Emden argues that Nietzsche’s naturalism holds at its core “that what we regard as normative – as belonging to the world of knowledge and morality but also to the world of affect – is already constitutive of our existence and agency as natural beings” (Christian Emden, *Nietzsche’s Naturalism*, 1).

Nietzsche's generalization that "the perspectival" is "the basic condition of *all* life" suggests that perspectivism is an even broader phenomenon that concerns more than just epistemology and meta-ethics.²⁵ Humans have different perspectives – political, aesthetic, as well as others – and our myriad existing languages each comes with a certain perspective and an anonymous interpretation of the world. In the later aphorisms of BGE, Nietzsche talks about "the perspective optics of life" and explains that "there would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspectival valuations and appearances [*perspektivischer Schätzungen und Scheinbarkeiten*]" (BGE 11 and 34, KSA 5, 26 and 53, my trans.; cf. BT Preface 5). For Nietzsche, all values and meanings depend on human valuations and interpretations which are perspectival value judgments and interpretations. In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche has his protagonist make several statements of what appears to be his own view of values and their origin. In one of them Zarathustra explains, "Indeed, humans gave themselves all their good and evil. Indeed, they did not take it, they did not find it, it did not fall onto them as a voice from the heavens. Humans first placed values into things, in order to preserve themselves, – they first created meaning for things, a human meaning! That is why they call themselves 'human', that is: the valuator [*der Schätzende*]" (Z I, Thousand and One Goals, KSA 4, 75, trans. by A. del Caro, slightly modified; cf. Z I, On the Hinterworldly, GS 301, GM II 8). Nietzsche refuses not only Plato's version of ethical realism and cognitivism, but also the claim of the three main monotheistic religions that God gives humans their values and moral commandments. Nietzsche elaborates his view on the actual origin of values and moral phenomena in the first essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality*. Values and moral codes are not discovered but invented by peoples and social groups according to their needs. In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche explains that different peoples have different cultural perspectives and thus different values and moral codes that serve for their self-preservation. They are the manifestation or expression of a people's "will to power" and of what they love and detest (Z II, On Self-Overcoming; Z I, Thousand and One Goals; cf. D 107). In *Beyond Good and Evil* and the *Genealogy*,

25 This aspect is explored by Ken Gemes who claims that "Nietzsche's perspectivism is best interpreted as a kind of psychobiological claim" (Ken Gemes, *Life's Perspectives*, 553, 571). Gemes' hermeneutic perspective, which connects perspectivism with the will to power understood as drives striving for expression, is both interesting and plausible. However, his arguments against the interpretation of perspectivism as an epistemological position, in particular his reading of GM III 12, are only partly convincing. It is not beneficial to pit a broader interpretation of perspectivism against its comprehension as an epistemological thesis or as a theory of truth. Rather, in interpreting Nietzsche's work we should apply his hermeneutic maxim according to which "the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity' be" (GM III 12, KSA 5, 365, trans. by W. Kaufmann a. R. J. Hollingdale). This article claims that, understood as an epistemological position, perspectivism is neither "banal" nor "implausible" (cf. Ken Gemes, *Life's Perspectives*, 571). In an earlier article Gemes argues that "Nietzsche is ultimately not interested in (theories of) truth" (Ken Gemes, *Nietzsche's Critique of Truth*, in: *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research*, LII/1 [1992], 47–65; here: 48).

Nietzsche further develops this view. Different value-judgments go back to distinct and competing social carriers, which leads to a historical and ongoing struggle between opposing values. The perspective, from which Nietzsche studies morality, focuses on the value of existing moral values and phenomena. He measures this value primarily by considering their impact on human beings and their lives. When Nietzsche examines the meaning of morality, he mainly looks at this phenomenon through the “optics of life” (*Optik des Lebens*) (BT Preface 4, KSA 1, 17; GM Preface 6). Nietzsche’s view that morality is the expression of a people’s “will to power” and of what they love and detest indicates that his meta-ethical position should be characterized as expressivism. Nietzsche’s view that moral codes are not discovered but invented suggests that he be interpreted as an ethical relativist. However, section 8 shows that he is a moral skeptic, but not an ethical relativist.

3 Perspectivism as thesis about “the nature of *animal consciousness*” (GS 354)²⁶

It is significant that in BGE 34 Nietzsche talks about “perspectival appearances”. This connects this aphorism to GS 354 in which he mentions – somehow enigmatically – the “true phenomenalism and perspectivism” (*der eigentliche Phänomenalismus und Perspektivismus*) (KSA 3, 593). This is the only time the word “Perspektivismus” occurs in Nietzsche’s published writings.²⁷ In GS 354, Nietzsche draws conclusions about human consciousness and human reason based on physiology and the biological theory of descent.²⁸ He assumes that the consciousness of the human animal and language have only developed because of the need to communicate with others. The human being is a “social animal” because it is an endangered animal that needs the help and protection of its equals. For Nietzsche, consciousness does not belong to the individual but to the “community and herd-aspects of his nature” (GS 354, KSA 3, 592, trans. by J. Nauckhoff). Nietzsche explains, “This is what *I* consider to be true phenomenalism and perspectivism: that due to the nature of *animal consciousness*, the world of which we can become conscious is merely a surface- and sign-world, a world turned into generalities and thereby debased [*vergemeinert*] to its lowest common denomi-

²⁶ For good reasons Richard Schacht claims that in GS 354 Nietzsche “understands the basic idea of ‘perspectivism’” as “a naturalistic thesis about ‘the nature of *animal consciousness*’” (Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche and the Perspectival*, 206).

²⁷ The word appears four times in the Nachlass (NL 7[21] and NL 7[60], KSA 12, 303 and 315; NL 14[186], KSA 13, 373).

²⁸ For a broad overview of the literature published on GS 354 and an extensive interpretation of this aphorism see Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsche’s Befreiung der Philosophie. Kontextuelle Interpretation des V. Buchs der Fröhlichen Wissenschaft*, Berlin a. Boston 2012, 262–288.

nator, – that everything which enters consciousness thereby *becomes* shallow, thin, relatively stupid, general, a sign, a herd-mark; that all becoming conscious involves a vast and thorough corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization. [...] We simply have no organ for *knowing*, for ‘truth’: we ‘know’ (or believe or imagine) exactly as much as is *useful* to the human herd, to the species [...]” (GS 354, KSA 3, 593, trans. by J. Nauckhoff). The main epistemological conclusion of the aphorism, that the human animal has “no organ for *knowing*, for ‘truth’”, Nietzsche expressed as early as 1873 in *On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense*. After “the death of God” and the biological theory of descent, man can no longer be conceived of as a similitude of God (D 49, BGE 202, A 14). As one consequence, God as the alleged creator of both the human being and the cosmos ceased to be the guarantor of the possibility of true knowledge or the agreement of our concepts or thoughts to the world.²⁹ As another consequence, human reason can no longer be considered to be a divine element in the human being as Plato and Aristotle taught (cf. TI “Reason” 5).³⁰ In *On Truth and Lying*, Nietzsche argues that the human being is a deficient animal as it has no horns and claws. To compensate for this deficiency, the human animal has its reason. From an evolutionary perspective, reason and knowledge have primarily developed as practical instruments for survival and self-preservation.³¹ To be sure, Nietzsche was neither the first nor the only modern thinker who naturalized, historicized, and therefore disillusioned the human being about its position in the cosmos.³² Nonetheless, he was the one who derived the most important and compelling philosophical consequences from the biological theory of descent. For Nietzsche, it is not only reason that has developed primarily as a tool for survival, but also language originated chiefly as a metaphor and sign for communication. These are good reasons that point toward the assumption that the human animal cannot achieve knowledge about the essence of

²⁹ Aristotle assumed the agreement of our concepts to the world. According to him, the “things” (*pragmata*) of the world cause notions in our “soul” (*psychē*) that are their “alike images” (*homoiōmata*) (*De interpretatione* 16a3–8). This understanding of the unity of thought and reality is still presupposed by Thomas Aquinas in the 13th century (*Quaestiones Disputate De Veritate* 1–13).

³⁰ Plato, *Republic* VI 490b, VII 518e, X 611e; Aristotle, *The Nicomachean Ethics* X 7 1177b27 ff.; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* XII 9 1074b15 ff.

³¹ Towards the beginning of *On Truth and Lying*, Nietzsche explains, “As a means for the preservation of the individual, the intellect shows its greatest strengths in dissimulation, since this is the means to preserve those weaker, less robust individuals who, by nature, are denied horns or the sharp fangs of a beast of prey with which to wage the struggle for existence” (TL, KSA 1, 876, trans. by R. Speirs). For the disagreement on the question of whether Nietzsche was a Darwinist in all periods of his career or whether his positive view of Darwin in the middle period changes towards a more critical approach in his later works see Andreas Urs Sommer, *Nietzsche mit und gegen Darwin in den Schriften von 1888*, in: *Nietzscheforschung*, 17 (2010), 31–44, 32, and Werner Stegmaier, *Darwin, Darwinismus, Nietzsche. Zum Problem der Evolution*, in: *Nietzsche-Studien*, 16 (1987), 264–287, 269.

³² Cf. Andreas Urs Sommer, *Der Mensch, das Tier und die Geschichte. Zur anthropologischen Desillusionierung im 19. Jahrhundert*, in: Oliver Müller a. Giovanni Maio (eds.), *Orientierung am Menschen. Anthropologische Konzeptionen und normative Perspektiven*, Göttingen 2015, 92–109.

the world. Nevertheless, this does not mean that we cannot achieve knowledge about the world that we experience and perceive. This is not the world “as it appears to us” because this way of phrasing it presupposes a true or essential world or things-in-themselves that appear. The mature Nietzsche rejects this metaphysical dualism (TI Fable).³³ The “true phenomenalism” and its positive understanding of “appearance” are opposed to the negative concepts of “appearance” and an “apparent world” postulated by this dualism.³⁴

Like his essay *On Truth and Lying*, Nietzsche's argument in GS 354 presupposes the strong version of the correspondence theory that is linked to the traditional metaphysical efforts to discover the essence of the world. The human animal has “no organ” for achieving such kind of knowledge or metaphysical truth. Cognition cannot get “hold of its object purely and nakedly as ‘the thing in itself’, without any falsification [*Fälschung*] on part of either the subject or the object” (BGE 16, KSA 5, 29, trans. by W. Kaufmann). Concepts such as “‘absolute knowledge’ and ‘the thing in itself’ involve a *contradictio in adjecto*” (BGE 16, KSA 5, 29, trans. by W. Kaufmann).³⁵ Human knowledge is always related to “subjective” perspectives and interpretations. Human beings are unable to assume a non-perspective “God's eye point of view” or a view from nowhere.³⁶ However, even if such a point of view were possible, the Kantian idea of a thing-in-itself would still remain a contradiction in terms. If we remove all the different possible perspectives on a thing as an object of knowledge, at best a thing itself would be left, certainly not a thing-in-itself.³⁷

33 Cf. Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 109–117.

34 As early as GS 54, Nietzsche rejects the metaphysical dualism but does not give up on the concept “appearance” (*Schein*), which he equates with “the active and living itself” (GS 54, KSA 3, 417, trans. by J. Nauckhoff). The same is true for BGE, in which he experiments with the ideas that there exist merely “levels of appearance” and that the “world *that is relevant for us*” is a “fiction” (*Fiktion*) (BGE 34, KSA 5, 53f., trans. by J. Norman).

35 For Nietzsche's rejection of the concept of the thing-in-itself, see Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 95–103.

36 According to Jessica Berry, a “God's eye view” is not a “view from nowhere”, but a “view from everywhere” (Jessica N. Berry, *Perspectivism as Ephexis in Interpretation*, in: *Philosophical Topics*, 33/2 (2005), 19–44; here: 25). Slightly modified, this article has been reprinted in Jessica N. Berry, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition*, Oxford 2011, 104–132.

37 Brian Leiter, *Perspectivism in Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals*, 350. For Nietzsche's critique of the idea of a thing in itself, see Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 95–103.

4 The perspectival and interpreting character of “existence” (*Dasein*)

In section 374 of Book V of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche makes the most general statements about his perspectivism that connects it to the theme of interpretation.³⁸ In the preceding section 373, titled “‘Science’ as prejudice”, Nietzsche criticizes Herbert Spencer and in particular the “materialistic natural scientists” and their ‘scientific’ interpretation of the world. Those ‘scientists’ believe that the essence of the world, the “‘world of truth’”, is composed out of mechanical laws and quantitative relations (GS 373, KSA 3, 625; cf. BGE 22). Nietzsche’s argument against this “‘scientific’ interpretation of the world”, which claims to be “the only rightful interpretation of the world”, points to the comprehension of the “*value* of a piece of music”. He argues that an approach to music that tries to quantify and express it in mathematical formulas does not understand anything about it (GS 373, KSA 3, 626, trans. by J. Nauckhoff). Nietzsche’s criticism, which is also a critique of attempts to strip “existence” (*Dasein*) “of its *ambiguous* character”, leads over to the following aphorism called “Our new ‘infinite’”, “How far the perspectival character of existence [*Dasein*] extends, or indeed whether it has any other character; whether an existence without interpretation, without ‘sense’, doesn’t become ‘nonsense’; whether, on the other hand, all existence isn’t essentially an *interpreting* existence – that cannot, as would be fair, be decided even by the most industrious and extremely conscientious analysis and self-examination of the intellect; for in the course of this analysis, the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself under its perspectival forms, and *solely* in these. We cannot look around our corner: it is a hopeless curiosity to want to know what other kinds of intellects and perspectives there *might* be [...]. But I think that today we are at least far away from the ridiculous immodesty of decreeing from our angle that perspectives are *permitted* only from this angle. Rather, the world has once again become infinite to us: insofar as we cannot reject the possibility *that it includes infinite interpretations*” (GS 374, KSA 3, 626 f., trans. by J. Nauckhoff). In this aphorism, Nietzsche explains that human beings cannot achieve absolute knowledge or take a non-situated God’s-eye view of things (cf. HH I 2, BGE 16). Our knowledge about the world can never be more than an interpretation from the perspectives of the human intellect and our language. Meaning is not “out there” in the world to be discovered but the creation of our intellect and language and thus a perspectival interpretation. We are not able to verify the agreement of our thoughts with the essence of things as the strong version of the correspondence theory defines truth. Such a view is not attainable. This limitation of our capacity to achieve knowledge also applies to Kant’s project of a self-examination of the faculties of the human

³⁸ For a contextual interpretation of GS 374 and the rejection of the claim that it contains a positive ontological assumption see Werner Stegmaier, *Nietzsche’s Befreiung der Philosophie*, 410–418.

intellect carried out in his *Critique of Pure Reason*. The human intellect is only 'one' out of many possible perspectives from which the world can be interpreted. Other species or animals have different bodies and sensory organs and thus different perceptions and perspectives.³⁹ The same is true for potential extraterrestrial beings with potentially different intellects. There exist only relations between the perspective of an interpreting subject, rooted in the perspective of its species, and an object. However, for Nietzsche the interpreting "subject" is not a Kantian transcendental I but the multitude of drives that "constitute" a man's "being" (*Wesen*), which all have their own perspectives (D 119, KSA 3, 111; NL 7[60], KSA 12, 315).⁴⁰ The question of how Nietzsche understands the object of interpretation will be addressed in section 7.

5 The problem of self-refutation

Perspectivism as an epistemological position or theory claims that we cannot gain knowledge about objects "as they really are," but are only able to interpret them from our "subjective" perspectives. This is not the only limitation to which human knowledge is subjected. Given Nietzsche's evolutionary perspective, reason and knowledge are primarily tools for survival. How can Nietzsche claim knowledge about the human animal and its epistemic condition given his view of reason and its limitations? What is the perspective of perspectivism?⁴¹ Is Nietzsche's epistemological position "self-referentially inconsistent or self-referentially paradoxical, or both"?⁴²

39 For possible influences on Nietzsche, see Scott Edgar, *The Physiology of the Sense Organs and Early Neo-Kantian Conceptions of Objectivity: Helmholtz, Lange, Liebmann*, in: Flavia Padovani / Alan Richardson / Jonathan Y. Tsou (eds.), *Objectivity in Science. New Perspectives from Science and Technology Studies* (Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science and History of Science 310), Heidelberg 2015, 101–124.

40 Cf. Ken Gemes, *Life's Perspectives*, 565.

41 Cf. Volker Gerhardt, *Die Perspektive des Perspektivismus*.

42 Steven D. Hales a. Robert C. Welshon, *Truth, Paradox, and Nietzschean Perspectivism*, in: *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 11/1 (1994), 101–119; here: 108. Hales and Welshon discuss several of the answers to the questions quoted above posed by Nietzsche-scholars. They investigate Nietzsche's "truth perspectivism", which they distinguish from "epistemological perspectivism" (ibid., 102). Hales and Welshon contrast "truth perspectivism" with "truth absolutism" and defend the former claiming that it is able to avoid paradox (ibid., 106, 111). Their defense is based on a distinction between a weak and a strong version of perspectivism. The former version allows for at least one statement or view that is true in an absolute sense, which among others includes Nietzsche's view about truth. The main problems of Hales' and Welshon's interpretation are that they separate "truth perspectivism" from "epistemological perspectivism" and completely ignore that Nietzsche's perspectivism is inextricably linked with his theory of interpretation. In 2000, Hales' and Welshon's book was published that builds on their early article, which goes mainly into chapter one (Steven D. Hales a. Robert C. Welshon, *Nietzsche's Perspectivism*, Urbana a. Chicago 2000).

There can be no doubt that Nietzsche's theory of knowledge only claims to be 'one' interpretation of the human epistemic condition among several other possible ones. Knowledge is a man-made concept and epistemologists mainly ask for the necessary and sufficient conditions required for knowledge. As Nietzsche concedes, "the human intellect cannot avoid seeing itself under its perspectival forms, and *solely* in these" (GS 374, KSA 3, 626, trans. by J. Nauckhoff). Nevertheless, Nietzsche is able to defend his perspectivism because he has good arguments against alternative interpretations of the human epistemic condition. Nietzsche's epistemological conclusion that no absolute knowledge is attainable but only perspectival interpretations does not entail that there cannot be interpretations of the human epistemic condition that are more adequate or appropriate than others.⁴³ The first main rival against which Nietzsche argues are the claims of metaphysicians from Plato to Hegel that human reason is somehow linked to the divine and thus able to gain absolute knowledge as agreement of theories to the essence of the world (for Nietzsche's arguments against this position see section 3).⁴⁴ The second main competitor of his perspectivism is Kant's transcendental idealism. For good reasons one could argue that Nietzsche's aim is to improve Kant's theory of knowledge.⁴⁵ The third main rival is the position that is nowadays called "metaphysical realism". This view claims that the world is composed out of theory- and thought-independent objects and that there exists a single true description of it, whether we are able to detect it or not. Metaphysical realism is frequently associated with the metaphysical or strong version of the correspondence theory of truth and the claim that human beings are able to gain true knowledge about the essence of the world or things-in-themselves. Nietzsche's works

43 Westphal notices that Nietzsche holds "that some perspectives are epistemically privileged" (Kenneth Westphal, *Nietzsche's Sting and the Possibility of Good Philology*, 83). Brian Leiter adopts this view, stating that for Nietzsche "some claims can enjoy an epistemic privilege" (Brian Leiter, *Perspectivism in Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals*, 340; cf. 336–343); Maudemarie Clark convincingly argues against Arthur Danto's interpretation of perspectivism according to which perspectives are incommensurable (Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 138–141). As already mentioned, Gerhardt shares Danto's view (Volker Gerhardt, *Die Perspektive des Perspektivismus*, 272 f.).

44 In regard to the charges that Nietzsche makes "a paradoxical or self-referentially inconsistent claim" and to Nietzsche's criticism of metaphysical claims to absolute knowing in GM III 12, Westphal ponders whether "the real paradox lies in trying to conceive of a non-perspectival knowing!" (Kenneth Westphal, *Nietzsche's Sting and the Possibility of Good Philology*, 82 f.).

45 For the claim that Kant's and Nietzsche's epistemologies are close, see Volker Gerhardt, *Die Perspektive des Perspektivismus*, 263. Müller contends for good reasons that Nietzsche's perspectivism is a continuation and radicalization of the perspectival philosophical views advanced by Leibniz and Kant (Enrico Müller, *Nietzsche-Lexikon*, 206). Emden argues that Nietzsche's philosophical naturalism "is perhaps best understood as a naturalized version of Kantian epistemology" (Christian Emden, *Nietzsche's Naturalism*, 1; see his chapter *Naturalizing Kant*, 101–124).

contain several arguments against these views and claims.⁴⁶ Nietzsche can defend his perspectivist epistemology by giving “internal reasons showing that its conceptual foundation can provide a better interpretation of our cognitive practices than the views that he saw as the chief alternatives, viz., metaphysical realism, and Kant’s transcendental idealism”.⁴⁷

If one acknowledges that Nietzsche successfully defends his perspectivism against alternative interpretations of the human epistemic condition and is therefore superior, one can still ask whether we can ‘know’ (and demonstrate) that it is ‘the’ accurate interpretation. If we accept the arguments with which Nietzsche substantiates his view of human reason and its limitations, the answer is a clear ‘no’. We are never able to irrevocably verify whether any interpretation of the human epistemic condition agrees to it. We are simply not able to step outside our cognitive perspective and check whether it corresponds to our relation to the world. We cannot take a non-situated God’s-eye view of things (cf. section 3). However, this limitation does not entail that we should stop exchanging arguments or working on better interpretations of the human epistemic condition. Among the last attempts to do exactly this is Hilary Putnam’s “internal realism”, which has been interpreted as a “successor” to Nietzsche’s perspectivism.⁴⁸

Nietzsche’s understanding of reason from an evolutionary perspective, which suggests that it is primarily a tool for survival, does not rule out that he can claim a reasonable interpretation of the human animal and its epistemic condition. A strong argument for this claim is that, in line with his century, Nietzsche does not only naturalize, but radically historicize the human being. Obviously, this allows for a serious development and progress of reason over the millennia. To be sure, for Nietzsche human reason has developed as a tool for self-preservation and is, essentially, a means for growth that aims at enhancing ‘its’ power by overpowering its object through compelling interpretations (cf. GM II 12). Nevertheless, scientific and philosophical progress show that reason is able to achieve appropriate interpretations of the world that correspond to the facts empirically discovered. Nietzsche was an empiricist, “All credibility, all good conscience, all evidence of truth come only from the senses” (BGE 134, KSA 5, 96, trans. by W. Kaufmann; cf. TI “Reason” 2–3).

46 For Nietzsche’s rejection of the concept of the thing-in-itself, see Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 95–103. For Nietzsche’s arguments against the strong version of the correspondence theory, see, e.g., Rüdiger Grimm, *Nietzsche’s Theory of Knowledge*, 43–65.

47 Lanier Anderson, *Truth and Objectivity in Perspectivism*, 10.

48 Anderson argues, “Putnam was not the first to exploit this connection between the notion of perspective and the rejection of a strong form of realism. The idea goes back at least to Nietzsche, whose entire epistemology travels under the name perspectivism. As I will argue in what follows, Nietzsche’s perspectivism, like internal realism, attempts to carve out a middle way between strong realism and wholesale relativism” (Lanier Anderson, *Truth and Objectivity in Perspectivism*, 2).

6 Nietzsche's multi-perspective approach in *On the Genealogy of Morality*

In the literature, section 12 of the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morality* is often interpreted as the “key passage” for Nietzsche’s perspectivism.⁴⁹ The main topic of the third essay is the question of what “ascetic ideals” ‘mean’. For Nietzsche, the ascetic ideal represents an unhealthy self-contradiction because it stands for life turning against life. After examining the meaning of the ascetic ideal for artists and priests, Nietzsche asks what it means for philosophers. Stated in the terminology of the preface to *Beyond Good and Evil*, in philosophy it means putting truth intentionally on her head. The philosophical “will to contradiction and antinaturalness” looks “for error precisely where the instinct of life most unconditionally posits truth. It will, for example, like the ascetics of the Vedanta philosophy, downgrade physicality to an illusion; likewise pain, multiplicity, the entire conceptual antithesis ‘subject’ and ‘object’” (GM III 12, KSA 5, 363 f., trans. by W. Kaufmann / R. J. Hollingdale).⁵⁰ However, as a philosopher Nietzsche assesses “such resolute reversals of accustomed perspectives and valuations” not exclusively as negative because they prepare “the intellect for its future ‘objectivity’” (GM III 12, KSA 5, 364, trans. by W. Kaufmann / R. J. Hollingdale).

In *Genealogy* III 12, Nietzsche contrasts his own positive conception of “objectivity” (which always appears in quotation marks in GM III 12) with a rejected conception connected to the ascetic ideal.⁵¹ Ascetic “objectivity” negates the indispensable “subjective” component in the process of cognition. Nietzsche’s criticism is directed against the traditional 19th century ideal of objectivity that holds true and objective knowledge to be independent from the knowing subject and its interpretations, char-

⁴⁹ Ken Gemes, *Life's Perspectives*, 561, cf. 557; Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 128; Maudemarie Clark, *On Knowledge, Truth, and Value: Nietzsche's Debt to Schopenhauer and the Development of his Empiricism*, 74; Brian Leiter, *Perspectivism in Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals*, 343.

⁵⁰ Ken Gemes claims, “Nietzsche does not explicitly mention truth or justification in any of the passages dealing with perspectivism in his published texts. While he does in the key passage which contains his most detailed discussion of perspectivism in his published work (GM III 12) mention ‘objectivity’ and ‘knowledge’ he puts quotation marks around both terms” (Ken Gemes, *Life's Perspectives*, 561, cf. 568). However, in GM III 12 Nietzsche mentions two times “truth” (*Wahrheit*), one time “true” (*wahr*), and one time at a crucial place “knowledge” (*Erkenntnis*) without quotation marks (KSA 5, 364 f.).

⁵¹ In her interpretation of GM III 12, Berry correctly states that Nietzsche rejects ascetic “objectivity” but that there “is a sense of ‘objectivity’ that Nietzsche will retain” (Jessica Berry, *Perspectivism as Ephexis in Interpretation*, 22, cf. 24). She believes that “perspectivism results in a deeply skeptical intuition that works not only against ascetic objectivity but also against the further epistemic goals and values of those who take it as an ideal” (Jessica Berry, *Perspectivism as Ephexis in Interpretation*, 25, cf. 20 f.).

acteristics, affects, will, interests etc. In the literature, it has been argued that *Genealogy* II 12 mainly targets Schopenhauer's claims that disinterested knowledge is both possible and allows for an ascetic escape from the world of willing through aesthetic contemplation.⁵² Nonetheless, it is interesting to notice that the 19th century ideal of contemplation without interests, will, and desires remained influential until the 20th century.⁵³ Nietzsche attacks such ideals of contemplation and objectivity by arguing that they and their claims "always demand that we should think of an eye that is completely unthinkable, an eye turned in no particular direction, in which the active and interpreting forces, through which alone seeing becomes seeing *something*, are supposed to be lacking; these always demand of the eye an absurdity and a nonsense. There is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing' [*Erkennen*']; and the *more* affects we allow to speak about one thing, the *more* eyes, different eyes, we can use to observe one thing, the more complete will our 'concept' of this thing, our 'objectivity,' be" (GM III 12, KSA 5, 365, trans. by W. Kaufmann / R.J. Hollingdale). Nietzsche's own ideal of "objectivity" presupposes "the ability *to control* one's Pro and Con and to dispose of them, so that one knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge" (GM III 12, KSA 5, 364 f.; cf. HH I, Preface 6). As our 'Pros' and 'Cons' are rooted in our drives, affects, and passions, they easily distort our judgment and endanger our 'objectivity'. As early as 1878, Nietzsche talks about the "genius of justice" who is opposed to one-sided convictions (i. e. stiffened opinions that grow out of passions) and wants to give "to each his own". Such genius avoids everything that confuses and deceives our judgment of things and "therefore sets every thing in the best light and observes it carefully from all sides" (HH I 636, KSA 2, 361, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale). One aim of Nietzsche's multi-perspectivism is a methodological approach that is today called an interdisciplinary approach.⁵⁴ What he has in mind becomes clear in a remarkable footnote at the end

52 Maudemarie Clark, *On Knowledge, Truth, and Value: Nietzsche's Debt to Schopenhauer and the Development of his Empiricism*, 74; Ken Gemes, *Life's Perspectives*, 568.

53 This ideal of contemplation is, e.g., expressed in Bertrand Russell's *The Problems of Philosophy* first published in 1912. "The true philosophic contemplation, on the contrary, finds its satisfaction in every enlargement of the not-Self, in everything that magnifies the objects contemplated, and thereby the subject contemplating. Everything, in contemplation, that is personal or private, everything that depends upon habit, self-interest, or desire, distorts the object, and hence impairs the union which the intellect seeks. By thus making a barrier between subject and object, such personal and private things become a prison to the intellect. The free intellect will see as God might see, without a *here* and *now*, without hopes and fears, without the trammels of customary beliefs and traditional prejudices, calmly, dispassionately, in the sole and exclusive desire of knowledge—knowledge as impersonal, as purely contemplative, as it is possible for man to attain" (Bertrand Russell, *The Problems of Philosophy* [second edition], Oxford 1998/2011, 93). Jessica Berry mentions this quotation for good reasons as "a fine example" for the ideal of objectivity Nietzsche rejects because it "fantasizes a knowing subject without any subjectivity and a desire to erase oneself from one's own picture of the world" (Jessica Berry, *Perspectivism as Ephexis in Interpretation*, 23).

54 Cf. Enrico Müller, *Nietzsche-Lexikon*, 208.

of the first essay of the *Genealogy*. In it he asks to examine the value of values and order of rank of moralities from different scientific perspectives: philology, linguistics (in particular etymology), history, physiology and other cognitive disciplines.⁵⁵ Such an interdisciplinary approach is indeed applied in the *Genealogy*.⁵⁶ It can do justice to its subjects and realize what we could call an ethics of science and knowledge.⁵⁷

To better understand what else Nietzsche has in mind with his multi-perspective approach to knowledge and “objectivity”, one should recall that he was trained as a philologist. Most advanced students of the humanities share the experience that in order to understand a text thoroughly it is not enough to carefully read and reread it. Our understanding increases with the amount of secondary literature we study. All the articles and books we read about the original text contain different perspectives and look at it with different eyes. These perspectives are constituted by different desires, drives, and affects that were struggling within the interpreters of the original text (cf. NL 7[60], KSA 12, 315). Looking through the eyes of these interpreters increases our knowledge and “objectivity” of it, no matter whether we agree or disagree with these interpretations. While forming our own interpretation, we usually engage or struggle with the claims of these different hermeneutic perspectives.⁵⁸ This Nietzschean interpretation of the hermeneutic process can be generalized and applied to other subjects about which we strive for knowledge, e.g. morality, values, history, religion, and suffering, the main topics of the *Genealogy*. All these subjects can be regarded as texts that need to be interpreted (cf. AC 52, BGE 22). The more perspectives we can acquire to look at these subjects and to interpret them, the better our knowledge of them will be.

The interpretation of suffering is a case in point to illustrate Nietzsche’s view that there exist better or worse, and healthier or unhealthier, interpretations and a rank order of wider and narrower perspectives. According to the third essay of the *Genealogy*, the ascetic ideal offers a comprehensive interpretation and valuation of human life that relates it to an otherworld and negates it from this imaginary point of reference. From the hermeneutic perspective of the ascetic priest, man is a guilty sinner

55 Cf. Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche and the Perspectival*, 213 f.

56 In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche not only applies a “physiological method” and offers “genealogical hypotheses” (*Herkunfts-Hypothesen*) about morality (GM, Preface 4, KSA 5, 251). He also wants to give “an actual *history of morality*” that is set against the Egyptian enslavement of the Jews that presumably lasted for 400 years (GM, Preface 7, KSA 5, 254). Nietzsche’s philosophical and historical analyses include and are partly based on psychological studies and etymological studies about terms such as “good”, “bad”, “evil” (GM I 4, 5, 11). The second essay is partly based on economical, legal, and anthropological studies.

57 Manuel Knoll, *Nietzsches Kritik am Willen zum Wissen und die intellektuelle Tugend der Redlichkeit*.

58 The experience of this struggle within our attempts to develop our own interpretation of a text illustrates Nietzsche’s statement that “the will to power interprets” (NL 2[148], KSA 12, 139). For an interpretation of Nietzsche’s philosophy based on this statement, see Johann Figl, *Interpretation als philosophisches Prinzip: Friedrich Nietzsches universale Theorie der Auslegung im späten Nachlaß* (Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung 7), Berlin a. New York 1982.

who should understand his suffering as punishment for his guilt. This interpretation “placed all suffering under the perspective of guilt”. Nietzsche rejects this interpretation arguing that it “brought fresh suffering with it, deeper, more inward, more poisonous, more life-destructive suffering” (GM III 28, KSA 5, 411, trans. by W. Kaufmann / R. J. Hollingdale). He contrasts the ascetic interpretation of suffering with his own physiological interpretation and perspective, which he holds to be superior. He argues “that man’s ‘sinfulness’ is not a fact, but merely the interpretation of a fact, namely of physiological depression – the latter viewed in a religio-moral perspective that is no longer binding on us. –” (GM III 16, KSA 5, 376, trans. by W. Kaufmann / R. J. Hollingdale; cf. BGE 108). Nietzsche interprets suffering not religiously as a consequence of sinfulness but scientifically as a physiological depression, clearly suggesting that his hermeneutic perspective is more appropriate. For Nietzsche, his interpretation corresponds more adequately to the phenomenon he is aiming to understand. He claims to have not only more perspectives to look at suffering than the ascetic priest, but better ones.

7 Different kinds of knowledge and of objects of interpretation

As already mentioned, Nietzsche rejects both the concept of a thing-in-itself and the distinction between a “true” and an “apparent” world. In line with these repudiations he claims that “we ‘know’ far too little to even be entitled to make” a distinction “between ‘thing-in-itself’ and appearance” (GS 354, KSA 3, 593, trans. by J. Nauckhoff). After the dismissal of these metaphysical concepts, the only world that remains is the world we perceive and experience. This world is the only one that matters for us and the only truth-maker. Maudemarie Clark claims that after Nietzsche had rejected the concept of a thing-in-itself and Schopenhauer’s view that knowledge is representation, in his final six works he overcame the “falsification thesis” and stopped denying truth: “As it is usually interpreted, perspectivism entails that human knowledge distorts or falsifies reality”.⁵⁹ For at least two reasons Clark’s interpretation is not convincing. First, as early as 1878 Nietzsche both concedes the possibility of truth and denies metaphysical or “absolute truth” (HH I 2 and 3, my trans.). Second, even in his last six works Nietzsche holds on to the “falsification thesis”.⁶⁰ However, he admits that

⁵⁹ Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 128; see for her claims 21–23, 95. Leiter declares that he agrees with Clark’s developmental approach (Brian Leiter, *Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s ‘Genealogy of Morals’*, 335).

⁶⁰ For good reasons Gemes states against Maudemarie Clark that he is “not sure that Nietzsche ever fully gave up the falsificationist thesis (see, for example, GM III 24 where falsifying is listed as part of ‘the essence of interpretation’)” (Ken Gemes, *Life’s Perspectives*, 562 [fn.17]). GM belongs to Nietzsche’s final six works.

falsification can be overcome in the process of interpretation. He defines philology “in a very general sense, as the art of reading well, – to be able to read facts *without* falsifying them through interpretations, *without* letting the desire to understand make you lose caution, patience, subtlety” (AC 52, KSA 6, 233, trans. by J. Norman; cf. Nietzsche’s criticism of the physicists who do “bad ‘philology’” in BGE 22).

According to Maudemarie Clark’s interpretation, perspectivism “denies that we can compare perspectives [...] in terms of the way things are in themselves”.⁶¹ This interpretation seems to neglect that the thing-in-itself or the essence of the world is not the only object of knowledge. There are other objects such as religion, suffering, written texts, and morality, which belong to a different category of objects. The knowledge about such objects belongs to a different type or kind than knowledge about the thing-in-itself or the essence of the world. The fact that we cannot achieve knowledge about the latter does not mean that we cannot achieve knowledge about the former. The crucial point, which several interpreters overlook, is that falsification can be overcome, or partially overcome, only for some of the objects the intellect interprets, not for all.⁶² Any metaphysical interpretation of the essence of the world or the thing-in-itself, even the best conceivable one, will forever remain a “falsification” and therefore cannot claim to be true. Nevertheless, more or less adequate interpretations about the world we perceive and experience are possible. Philologists can certainly come up with better or worse interpretations of a text. The more facts and perspectives they can gain, the better their interpretation of this text will be. Historians, looking for knowledge by testimony, can discover new sources or develop new perspectives that allow them to come up with better interpretations of a historical event. A better interpretation in this context means a less distorting or more adequate one. In these cases, scholars do not compare their hermeneutic perspectives and interpretations to “the way things are in themselves”, but to the way they perceive and experience their objects and to all the data they can empirically access about them. An interpretation is more appropriate, if it corresponds more closely to these perceptions, experiences, and data.

Like the objects of Nietzsche’s own studies such as morality, religion, and philosophy, the aforementioned objects – texts and historical sources – are human products and phenomena. Therefore, in contrast to objects such as the essence of the world or nature it is much “easier” to gain knowledge about them through interpretation. Human beings can better understand what they and their “species-members” created or did than the non-human world they are part of. With his perspectival hermeneutic method, Nietzsche mainly aims at knowledge and truth about objects that are human products and phenomena. This is maybe best seen in his *Genealogy*, in which he intends to give “an actual *history of morality*” (GM, Preface 7, KSA 5, 254). The most important object of Nietzsche’s interpretations and concern is the human animal, its

⁶¹ Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 142.

⁶² Among the exceptions is Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche*, 58 f., 104 f.

potentials, capabilities, health, elevation, and future.⁶³ Culture, and in particular religion and morality, are the means through which the human animal is formed in the course of history (BGE 62, EH Z 7). The human being is not an easy object of knowledge and truth because it is both part of nature and a product of culture.

8 The preface to *Human, All Too Human*

The statements about “the perspectival” in the preface to *Human, All Too Human. A Book for Free Spirits I* from 1886 are not presented as requests Nietzsche directly addresses to his readers. However, he repeats these statements in other passages of his published works. Therefore, they should be attributed to him as author. In the preface, he contrasts the “fettered spirit”, who is chained to his pillar and corner, with the free spirit, who experienced the “great liberation”. For Nietzsche, a recovering “free spirit” like himself might unveil the riddle of his “great liberation” and receive as answer to his questions, “You should become master over yourself, master also over your virtues. Formerly they were your masters; but they must be only your instruments beside other instruments. You should get control over your For and Against and learn how to display first one and then the other in accordance with your higher goal. You should learn to grasp the perspectival in every value judgement [*Werthschätzung*] – the displacement [*Verschiebung*], distortion and merely apparent teleology of horizons and whatever else pertains to the perspectival; also the quantum of stupidity that resides in antitheses of values and the whole intellectual loss which every For, every Against costs us. You should learn to grasp the *necessary* injustice in every For and Against, injustice as inseparable from life, life itself as *conditioned* by the perspectival and its injustice. [...] you should see with your own eyes the problem of *order of rank*, and how power and right and scope of perspective grow into the heights together” (HH I, Preface 6, KSA 2, 20 f., trans. by R. J. Hollingdale, slightly modified; cf. BT Preface 5). In this passage, Nietzsche focuses mainly on the meta-ethical dimension of his perspectivism. As early as July 23 1884, in a letter to Overbeck he talks about “his teaching that the world of good and evil is merely an apparent and perspectival world” (my trans.).⁶⁴ This statement is an expression of Nietzsche’s moral skepticism that denies objective moral facts and holds that all values depend on perspectival value judgments. His central statement in the Preface to HH I about the “the perspectival in every value

⁶³ For Nietzsche’s philosophy of man and the „overman“ (*Übermensch*), see Manuel Knoll, *The Übermensch as Social and Political Task: A Study in the Continuity of Nietzsche’s Political Thought*, in: Manuel Knoll a. Barry Stocker (eds.), *Nietzsche as Political Philosopher* (Nietzsche Today 3), Berlin a. Boston 2014, 239–266.

⁶⁴ KGB III.1, nr. 521, 514; cf. Andreas Urs Sommer, *Kommentar zu Nietzsches ‘Jenseits von Gut und Böse’*, 63.

judgement” is repeated in *Beyond Good and Evil* where Nietzsche explains that “there would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspectival valuations and appearances” (BGE 34, KSA 5, 53; cf. BGE Preface).⁶⁵

Value judgments are judgments for or against something. While some things are judged as good and valuable, others are assessed as bad and worthless. Value judgments are mainly rooted in our drives, affects, and passions and go along with perspectives and interpretations (cf. NL 7[60], KSA 12, 315). All interpretations are inextricably linked to the will to power and go along with some violence (GM II 12). Essential to interpreting is “forcing, adjusting, shortening, omitting, filling-out, inventing, falsifying” (GM III 24, KSA 5, 400, trans. by C. Diethe). When in the Preface to HH I Nietzsche claims that “displacement”, “distortion”, and “injustice” pertain “to the perspectival”, he addresses an important aspect of perspectivism that he mentions again in aphorism 354 of *The Gay Science*. This aspect has been widely discussed under the name of the “falsification thesis”.⁶⁶

Perspectival value judgments are always one-sided, limited, and inappropriate. They do not give their object its due and are therefore unjust. Judging some things as good and valuable, others as bad and worthless, prevents us from seeing and understanding crucial aspects of the things we assess. The fact that we see a thing, e.g. a book, a piece of music or a particular virtue, that we evaluate just from a few and never from all perspectives limits our judgment and means not only an injustice but an “intellectual loss”. This is why Nietzsche, as early as 1878 in HH I, talks about the “genius of justice” who is opposed to one-sided convictions and observes everything “carefully from all sides” in order to give “to each his own” (HH I 636, KSA 2, 361). And this is why Nietzsche in GM III 12 asks for a multi-perspective approach that “knows how to employ a *variety* of perspectives and affective interpretations in the service of knowledge” and presupposes “the ability *to control* one’s Pro and Con and to dispose of them”.⁶⁷ In this context, Nietzsche makes the remarkable declaration that justice is “the only goddess we recognize over us” (HH I 637, KSA 2, 362).⁶⁸ In BGE, Nietzsche explains that “the *perspectival*” is “the basic condition of all life”. In the Preface to HH I he adds the ethical or meta-ethical insight that life is “*conditioned* by the perspectival and its injustice”.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ See for both Nietzsche’s moral skepticism and for his statement that “there would be no life at all if not on the basis of perspectival valuations and appearances” section 2 of this article.

⁶⁶ Cf. section 7 of this article.

⁶⁷ Cf. section 6 of this article.

⁶⁸ The subtitle of HH is a *A Book for Free Spirits*. Therefore, when Nietzsche talks about “us” he presumably refers to the “free spirits” including himself. The importance of aphorisms 636 and 637 for Nietzsche is indicated by the fact that he placed them among the last three ones of HH I.

⁶⁹ Cf. UM 3, KSA 1, 269, and Friedrich Kaulbach, *Nietzsche’s Idee einer Experimentalphilosophie*, Böhlau a. Köln 1980, 70 f.

The Preface to HH I demonstrates that Nietzsche is a moral skeptic, but not an ethical relativist because he acknowledges inferior and superior perspectives, values, and value judgments.⁷⁰ He explains that “*the problem of order of rank*” is both his problem and the problem of the free spirits (HH I, Preface 7). This problem is a recurring theme of Nietzsche’s published works (BGE 228, BGE 257, GM I 17, AC 57). Narrow perspectives that correspond to an impoverished life are most unjust towards the object they interpret. In contrast, wider and more comprehensive perspectives represent more power and more justice.⁷¹ In order to overcome injustice and narrow perspectives as much as possible, Nietzsche asks for a multi-perspective or multi-focal approach.

9 Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that Nietzsche’s perspectivism is both a meta-ethical and an epistemological position. However, it has focused on Nietzsche’s theory of knowledge showing that as an epistemological position perspectivism is directed mainly against metaphysics and dogmatic philosophy and their claims to absolute knowledge and absolute truth. Directed against dogmatic and unprovable claims to knowledge about the essence of the world, perspectivism is part of Nietzsche’s skepticism.⁷² Nonetheless, his own cognitive practices and works demonstrate that Nietzsche is not an absolute but a moderate skeptic who does not completely forsake knowledge and truth as the ‘postmodern’ Nietzsche allegedly does.⁷³ As early as 1878

70 A common form of relativism equates value judgments with taste or aesthetic judgments and holds “*de gustibus disputandum non est*”.

71 Cf. HH I 636–638, EH Preface 3, NL 2[108], KSA 12, 114, and Friedrich Kaulbach, *Nietzsche’s Idee einer Experimentalphilosophie*, 66–82.

72 Cf. Volker Gerhardt, *Die Perspektive des Perspektivismus*, 271. In a remarkable aphorism, Nietzsche declares that “great spirits are sceptics. Zarathustra is a sceptic. The vigour, the *freedom* that comes from the strength and super-strength of spirit *proves* itself through scepticism” (AC 54, KSA 6, 236, trans. by J. Norman). In the aphorism, Nietzsche criticizes “men of faith” and of “convictions” as weak and as slaves. They are “the *antagonist* of the truthful person, – of truth ... A faithful person is not free to have any sort of conscience for the question ‘true’ or ‘untrue’: honesty on *this* point would be his immediate downfall” (AC 54, KSA 6, 236 f., trans. by J. Norman). It is noteworthy that Nietzsche understands both the skeptic and the truthful person as the antagonists of the faithful person. For a comprehensive analysis of Nietzsche’s relation to skepticism, see Andreas Urs Sommer, *Friedrich Nietzsche*, in: Diego E. Machuca a. Baron Reed (eds.), *Skepticism. From Antiquity to the Present*, London 2018, 442–453. Berry claims, “In the end, we need not abandon the hope of discovering that a cohesive framework, even a naturalist framework suitably qualified, unifies Nietzsche’s thought in virtue of accepting that his philosophical orientation is at bottom skeptical” (Jessica Berry, *Nietzsche and the Ancient Skeptical Tradition*, 10).

73 While an “absolute skeptic” claims that “no truths can be discerned”, a “moderate skeptic” holds that some interpretations are more in line with our observations and experiences than others (cf. HH I 225 and 226, BGE 134, TI “Reason” 2–3).

in *Human, All Too Human*, Nietzsche makes a declaration that remains valid for the rest of his career: There “are no eternal facts, just as there are no absolute truths. Consequently what is needed from now on is *historical philosophizing*, and with it the virtue of modesty”. This means that from now on Nietzsche aims at what in 1878 he calls the “little unpretentious truths which have been discovered by means of rigorous method” (HH I 2 and 3, KSA 2, 25, trans. by R. J. Hollingdale).

This study has further shown that Nietzsche’s perspectivism is ‘one’ interpretation of the human epistemic condition among several others and that he argues that it is superior to those. Nietzsche does not only criticize rival theories of knowledge, but proposes a multi-perspective hermeneutic method that allows the human animal to achieve knowledge and truth about subjects such as the human being, reason, language, philosophy, history, morality, values, suffering, politics, and religion. However, after the death of God, the biological theory of descent, and the demise of metaphysics, knowledge and truth are only available as perspectival interpretations that compete with others and are always open to experiment, revision, and improvement. For Nietzsche, this is not a step backwards, but rather a more realistic and appropriate view of the human epistemic condition. In *Ecce homo*, he clearly admits that advancement of knowledge is possible, “How much truth can a spirit *tolerate*, how much truth is it willing *to risk*? This increasingly became the real measure of value for me. Error (– the belief in the ideal –) is not blindness, error is *cowardice* . . . Every achievement, every step forward in knowledge, *comes* from courage, from harshness towards yourself, from cleanliness with respect to yourself . . . ” (EH Preface 3, KSA 6, 259, trans. by J. Norman, emphasis corrected).⁷⁴ This is one of Nietzsche’s last statements about the “*the problem of order of rank*”, which is a recurring theme of his thought. This statement substantiates once more the main thesis of this article that Nietzsche perspectivism provides a hermeneutic method that allows the human animal to achieve knowledge and truth about certain objects.

In the literature, the prevailing label of Nietzsche position as “perspectivism” has been criticized.⁷⁵ However, as W. V. Quine correctly states, “Names of philosophical positions are a necessary evil”.⁷⁶ Nevertheless, we can distinguish between good and bad names or labels. As argued in section I of this article, it is problematic to label Nietzsche’s position as ‘postmodern’ or ‘naturalist’ because these two labels refer to

⁷⁴ Cf. Maudemarie Clark, *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*, 196 f.

⁷⁵ For Dellinger, the “Vorstellung, dass es sich beim Ausdruck ‘Perspektivismus’ um eine durch Nietzsches eigenen Sprachgebrauch sanktionierte Bezeichnung einer von ihm vertretenen erkenntniskritischen Position handle“, is problematic (Jakob Dellinger, *Du sollst das Perspektivische in jeder Werthschätzung begreifen lernen*, 341 [note 1]).

⁷⁶ Quine further explains, “They are necessary because we need to refer to a stated position or doctrine from time to time, and it would be tiresome to keep restating it. They are evil in that they come to be conceived as designating schools of thought, objects of loyalty from within and objects of obloquy from without, and hence obstacles, within and without, to the pursuit of truth” (Willard Van Orman Quine, *Naturalism; Or, Living Within One’s Means*, in: *Dialectica*, 49/2–4 [1995], 251–261; here: 251).

a huge number of different views. In contrast, the label 'perspectivism' is appropriate for both Nietzsche's epistemological and meta-ethical position. First, Nietzsche numerous times in crucial contexts uses terms such as 'the perspectival', 'perspectival', 'perspective', and such like. To be sure, in the published works 'perspectivism' (*Perspektivismus*) only occurs one time and there are good reasons to think that Nietzsche does not intend to establish any '-ism'. Nonetheless, in the *Nachlass* Nietzsche explains, "Insofar as the term 'knowledge' makes sense, the world is knowable: but it can be interpreted in different ways, it has no meaning behind it, but uncountable meanings 'perspectivism'" (NL 7[60], KSA 3, 15, my trans.; cf. GS 374). This statement is in line with the published passages, which connect perspectivism to the theme of interpretation, and an appropriate characterization of a central aspect of Nietzsche's epistemological position or theory. Second, Nietzsche's visual metaphor and its analogy of seeing and knowing, which goes back to Plato's allegory of the sun, is meaningful because it highlights the inevitable and limited human point of view and "subjective" contribution in the process of knowing.⁷⁷ Third, this elucidates that the human animal can never reach absolute knowledge. As a consequence, it needs to actively strive for appropriate interpretations of the world, which it has to defend by the use of reason and argument.

The term "perspectivism" is also a fitting name for Nietzsche's meta-ethical position. As mentioned before, Nietzsche should be interpreted as an anti-realist and moral skeptic but not as an ethical relativist. First, Nietzsche talks about "perspectival valuations" (*perspektivische Schätzungen*), "the perspectival in every value judgement [*Werthschätzung*]", "moral interpretation", and about "accustomed perspectives and valuations". Second, such expressions articulate more than just the negative thesis that there are no moral facts and no objective or absolute moral reality about which moral knowledge can be achieved. They elucidate the active and constructive human role and contribution to the phenomenon of morality. As "the valuator", the human being creates or invents values and moralities from the perspective of collective needs, interests, and desires. Third, perspectival value judgments necessarily go along with perspectival interpretations and therefore have a cognitive or epistemic dimension.⁷⁸ These are some reasons why perspectivism should also be regarded as an appropriate name for Nietzsche's meta-ethical position.

⁷⁷ Of course, Nietzsche rejects Plato's claim that the form of the good is "the cause of the knowledge and truth" (*Politeia* VI 508e, trans. by A. Bloom). For a detailed analysis of the "metaphor of perspective", see Lanier Anderson, *Truth and Objectivity in Perspectivism*, 2-7.

⁷⁸ Cf. section 8 of this article.