

Nate Kaufman
PSCI: 4330
04/21/04
Exam 3

A Look at Nietzsche

Nietzsche is critical of previous philosophers for many reasons, including his accusations that they are dogmatic and prejudice in their beliefs. Now it may be necessary to note that when he refers to dogmatism, it is essentially a belief in anything, or perhaps an idea that is attributed some truth label, when it has clearly been formulated from the prejudices of its author. Previous philosophers sought to answer the notion of an "absolute truth" and have put a great deal of emphasis on this falsehood, according to Nietzsche. But we must ask ourselves, why do we prefer truth as apposed to untruth? If a philosopher formulates an idea, gives it a truth value, and puts it into practice, is that an ultimate truth? No, it has been created from past prejudices, inferences, and morales. So the question remains, do we really want truth? If so, why selflessness, and empathy, why not greed, and apathy. This is the first, of many, of the previous metaphysician's false beliefs, the "faith in opposite values." That is truth out of deception, selflessness out of selfishness and so on. This notion of opposites, such as without evil there can be no good, is part of the "Old Philosophy." Why does the value of life rest in the positive side why not the negative, i.e. deception, greed, and lust? Nietzsche argues that these are not opposites but merely gradations of one another. Unfortunately, many philosophers do not want to, or simply do not recognize this gradation. If these previous philosophers gave a truth value to these opposites, and these defined our world, nature, and our philosophy, then a belief in something that is itself, impossible according to Nietzsche, is a belief in God. A supreme, limitless, undefinable thing. But the same thing cannot be itself, or at least define itself using itself as a guideline or measuring stick. Nietzsche gives the example of our sense organs, which "are not phenomena in the sense of idealistic philosophy; and as such they could not be causes." What this means is that sense organs do not define the external world, if they did however, then they would also define our bodies, and taking it even further our sense organs themselves. As said

before nothing can define itself from itself. This would mean that it would be its own cause, and this would suffer as a dogmatic belief. Something without a cause, or being its own cause, would not be subject to our sense organs or for that matter any form of interpretation. This idea of cause and effect, one thing coming out of another, is a dogmatic belief that previous philosophers attempted to hold on to. This is what Nietzsche means when he says an "Old World philosophy."

Philosophy is conscious thinking included in instinctive activities, as Nietzsche describes it. In other words, we cannot control what we think about at any given moment. We pick an idea, but we do not choose to think, that is instinctive. Therefore, what a philosopher thinks and labels as truth, has been guided by his instincts. Everyone is limited by valuations and a preservation for a certain type of life. By moving outside this realm of life they would upset the balance of even their own life, which no one wants to do, unless daring enough. After all, the most precious thing we own is our own body. This preservation is for mankind itself, our own species nothing else. But what if mankind was not the absolute measure of things, would the basis for the philosopher's beliefs be unfounded? Questions such as this are the philosophy of "life-promoting, life preserving, species-cultivating" judgments. (Pg 11) Philosophers of this day and age are not honest to themselves about their own theories. They act as though they have reached the core of their true opinions, but more often than not, the sole driving force behind their ideas is a "hunch," an inspiration that has been filtered by the above mentioned desire to preserve life, and act as an *absolute truth*. When it comes down to it, their ideas are nothing more than prejudices but they do not have the courage or the conscience to admit this. Mathematics is an example used as a man-made prejudice that has been labeled the absolute truth, and no one has the courage to challenge the basis on which it was created. Philosophers such as Spinoza "clad" their philosophy with such *absolute truths* as Mathematics. It is therefore the "love of his wisdom," that all philosophers claim to be completely apart from their own philosophy. Each philosophy becomes the gradual "personal confession," of the works author. This leads to claims of false judgments, but it is not the falseness of the judgment that is important to the philosopher but whether it is indispensable to life, if they feel we cannot live without it. These

philosophers act under the notion of a drive for knowledge, seeking the truth, and while a handful may in fact be earnestly seeking the truth, most are not, or they think they are but are really peddling what they have to offer. Each one of these philosophers would love that their idea be called a universal truth, the “legitimate master of the other drives. (Pg 14)” Many refer to themselves as Stoics and by doing so, displace themselves from emotion in order that they may be able to govern over the knowledge or truth at hand. If this were the case, they would say that they are only interested in the facts, emotions and uncertainties do not matter, only what is certain. However, it is these very philosophers that seek to change nature herself. They seek to impose their morality, and ideals on nature, so that they and their philosophy may be elevated. So called Stoic’s and other philosophers draw on what Nietzsche refers to as the “Old Philosophy.” This philosophy seeks to attach some degree of truth to what is theorized, or given a judgmental value. They also put their “faith in opposite values,” such as truth and deceit, whereas they are merely a gradation of one to another. The latter being the more significant to the realm of human emotion. These Old Philosophers also seek to, in a matter of speaking, force their morale’s or lack thereof on nature. Place a certain set of guidelines on nature, as if it had none without man. It is in this way and for other reasons that the most important drive considered, what supercedes the rest is the will to self-preservation, to survive. But according to Nietzsche, this is not the case. The primary drive, the fundamental judgment is the *will to power*. The will of self-preservation is merely a resultant factor of this *will to power*. Philosophy seeks to create the world in its own image, thus enters the *will to power*. (Pg 16)

“The drive of knowledge” is not the “father of philosophy,” as once thought, but it is a different drive. So what is this *will to power*? According to Nietzsche no. The will or our ability to will, or willing is a multifaceted word, that many previous philosophers may not have taken into account. The ability to will discloses a certain discourse that will explain this *will to power*.

Our will is a result a several body sensations, muscular sensations, instincts, and thinking, the thought of a will. Finally, taking all these other factors into account, it is also an affect, the affect of a command. The

“freedom of the will is essentially the affect of superiority in relation to him who must obey. (Pg 25)” “I am free, ‘he’ must obey. (Pg 25)” This action is inherent in every will. This will seeks to discharge strength on something weaker, in fact it can be the will over one’s own actions, or body. Also, this *will to power* capitalizes on the strength of the strong. They, the strong, always seek to subjugate the weak. This is the encroaching nature of power. Nietzsche suggests that in the realm of human actions, there is not a single selfless deed. Take for example, giving to charity. This is nothing more than the power of the rich over the poor, “I have money and you do not.” This *will to power* is also in the philosophers desire to control and define nature. By having power over nature we have power over the ultimate thing. This *will to power* is inherent in every single action or thought we make, as Nietzsche suggests.

However, is this *will to power* is the main philosophy behind Nietzsche’s ideas, and if it is a hunch, or inspiration than does Nietzsche fall victim to being dogmatic as well? He does on at least two accounts, the first of which is the belief in the *will to power*. Now it seems that the nature of the *will to power* is the exact same as the *will to knowledge*. The belief in them is one in the same. Neither are refutable, or completely provable. They are both intangible, so cannot be seen with the senses. They are therefore hunches or theories, these being the very same thing he accused the previous philosophers of. By believing in something you are in a sense being dogmatic, whether it is the will to knowledge or power or whatever else may spark your imagination. If free will is a dogmatic belief on principle, then the contradiction to free will must be based on a principle and therefore must be inherently dogmatic. Also, the belief that the strong exert power on the weak, is cause and effect. I have power and seek to dispel it, cause, your are weak and will become obedient, effect. This is the exact thing Nietzsche accused previous philosophers of, this dogmatic idea. Secondly, Nietzsche speaks of an economy of principles. He claims that a *will to power* must be the primary drive because the economy of principles demands it. Principles are what, morales, and whether they are bad or good principles they are nonetheless standards of conduct, limits, boundaries, morales. Previously Nietzsche described the belief in morals, in binaries such as good and evil to be prejudice to our own tastes, but isn’t this economy of principles the exact same thing. It is a

belief that we are inherently driven, but limited beings. We have our line of discernment. We know what is good, truthful, and pure, just like we know what is evil, deceitful, and immoral. This is dogmatism, a belief in our ultimate goodness or evilness.

It should probably be noted that Nietzsche realized that there may be some aspect of dogmatism in his theory, but he also may be aware that we are incapable of completely disregarding ourselves from it. We continuously take our ideas from past theories and ideas, we are incapable of taking ourselves completely out of the text in which we live. Even Nietzsche is incapable of such a task.