

## Nietzsche on truth & perspectivism

PHIL 449, Spring 2014

### Nietzsche's perspectivism

1. GM III.12

2. Reginster article: “the sorts of considerations which count as reasons or justifications for holding beliefs depend on principles, or ‘verification procedures,’ which are susceptible to perspectival variation” (40).

-- perspectives provide the standards we use for rational thought, for what counts as justification for beliefs, values, actions

3. Owen, Chapter 7: we can't get rid of all affects and interests in seeking knowledge; we at least always have the desire to know driving us (124-125)

-- but other interests and affects drive what we seek to know, and how

4. Ridley, “The Scientist” (optional reading for last week): in order to even recognize a claim as true, it has to fulfill some criteria for truth, some “standards of rational acceptability” (107), and those can vary

-- “Within a given ‘system of purposes’ the truth is whatever (currently) best satisfies the standards of rational acceptability immanent to that system” (114; “system of purposes” is from GM II.12)

### Self-referentiality of perspectivism

1. If “all claims to truth are justified only within the terms of one or more perspectives,” it seems we must say that that claim in quotes itself is also so justified

-- this would mean it is valid within one or more perspectives, but not necessarily all

-- question from group discussion last week: “Relativism is self-defeating, is perspectivism the same?”

2. Reginster: “All that Nietzsche appears to think is required if his own assertion of perspectivism is that it be ratified by the terms of his perspective. This is, indeed, what justification *is*, according to strong perspectivism” (41).

-- is this a problem in any way?

### Nietzsche's own truth claims

1. There are numerous places in GM where N seems to be saying that his claims are true, e.g.:

-- Preface Sect. 7

-- Treatise 1, sects. 1, 2

-- Treatise 2, sects. 4, 11

-- Treatise 3, sects. 12, 19

-- *Is N then saying these things are true from his own perspective?*

## 2. group discussions from last week

-- N may not be making any particular truth claims, but claims about how truth works, what it is—such as that it is what the powerful assert (including the sovereign individual, for themselves)

-- N advocates naturalism because he finds it the best explanation, but this is coming from his own perspective

-- N wouldn't mind his perspective being revised (an "enemy as a mark of distinction"). He argues for change, constant becoming, so perhaps his own perspective is changing too.

-- N puts on several different masks, perspectives, so it's hard to tell which is his own

## 3. Gemes, "Nietzsche's Critique of Truth"

-- N thinks that all metaphysical claims are "lies" (57)

-- But deceptions and lies are not necessarily problematic: they can work in the service of promoting life (53)

-- N is more interested in the effects of truth claims on promoting or hindering various forms of life than on their truth value (63-65)

## **Who is Nietzsche's intended audience in GM, and what is he trying to do to/for/with them?**

### 1. Owen

a. three things GM tries to do, p. 65: seems like audience is those who still hold to "slave values"

-- loosen the grip of the audience on their moral perspective so they can assess it

-- provide reasons for assessment that are valid in the audience's perspective and in the one N wants them to adopt (70)

-- mobilize the audience's affects to get them to reassess their moral values

b. N tries to change their mind by appealing to "truthfulness", a value they and he both hold (70); need this for "reflective stability" (41)

-- but are the audiences' idea of "truthfulness" and N's idea of it the same? If not, can there be reflective stability?

### 2. Reginster on N's audience

a. N is talking to those who hold to Christian value system, using immanent critique so they can see that some of their beliefs & values are inconsistent

b. N doesn't have to hold himself the beliefs or values on which he bases this immanent critique (47)

3. Some places in GM that uphold Reginster's & Owen's view of N's audience, as those who currently hold Christian values

-- I.8, I.9, III.27

4. Gemes on N's audience (in "Nietzsche's Critique of Truth")

a. N doesn't mind if those with weak wills have Christian values, ascetic ideals (56, 58); they are unlikely to be among his readers, and even if are, probably not "particularly likely to be affected by his writings" (58)

-- N is interested in liberating those with strong wills for whom Christian values are "enfeebling" (58)

b. some places in GM that support Gemes' view of N's audience, looking at where he says "we" and "us"

-- III. 14, III.16, III.24

5. Perhaps a combination: N's audience as possibly those who still hold to Christian values but who are amenable to criticism of them, who are strong enough to question them.

-- N's text as giving them reasons to engage in this questioning and re-evaluation