

**Notes on presentation on Reginster, “Perspectivism, Criticism and Freedom of Spirit”**  
PHIL 449, Feb. 6, 2014

**What is perspectivism, for N, according to Reginster?**

1. perspective: quote on p. 43: “a set of beliefs which constitutes an agent’s deliberative viewpoint ...”
2. perspectivism: another quote on p. 43: “the content of such deliberative viewpoints is susceptible to variation ...”
  - can vary from one group or individual to another
  - no foundational, objective beliefs from which all disagreements could be adjudicated
  - denies any objective viewpoint from which to make judgments
  
  - e.g., see GM III.12, also *Gay Science* 374: we shouldn’t think that perspectives are permitted only from our corner (i.e., that our view is not a perspective)

**Problem:** If we can only justify our beliefs by our own standards, how can N’s criticism of slave morality in GM be valid?

Three goals of criticism, according to Reginster

1. determining whether an agent’s view is right
2. determining whether the agent is right to hold that view
3. changing the agent’s mind

How can N accomplish any of these goals if he takes a different perspective from the one he criticizes in GM?

**Reasonable disagreement**

- both parties are justified in holding their side of a dispute because they come from different perspectives (45)
- e.g., Christian morality values compassion; Nietzsche condemns this value

How do you get over the obstacle of reasonable disagreement? Acc to Reginster, N uses internal criticism

**Internal criticism**

“A form of criticism that invokes considerations accepted in the perspective under criticism” [what page in Reginster?]

- example: N’s internal criticism of Christian value of compassion: Christians value comfortableness, desire to get rid of suffering, but they also value unconditional truthfulness and the pursuit of truth often brings suffering
- so Christian position is inconsistent

Is internal criticism effective?

Can realization of this inconsistency bring about any of the three goals of criticism, above?

- I think it doesn’t, and I don’t think Reginster thinks it does
- the Christian might still try to adhere to the belief in compassion; doesn’t show conclusively that this belief was wrong or Christian wrong to hold it

-- doesn't win the Christian over to N's position

Why does N invoke internal criticism, then? Possibilities Reginster suggests

1. urge interlocutor to be more self-reflectively critical in general
2. maybe to change interlocutor's mind by getting them to give up some beliefs that he disapproves of b/c they are inconsistent w/other beliefs the interlocutor holds

### **Why N uses internal criticism, acc to Reginster**

- because of N's commitment to freedom of spirit (52)
- ensures that if interlocutor changes his/her mind, this will be based on reasons that the interlocutor holds

what is freedom of spirit?

- self-determination, evaluating on one's own account (*Human, All too Human* 3; *Gay Science* 347)
- liberating oneself from tradition; demanding reasons rather than faith (*Human, All too Human* 225)
- shouldn't believe anything without giving oneself an account of the reasons pro and con (*Gay Science* 2)
- involves active critical agency: Christian should have questioned whether compassion is congruent with his/her other values before accepting it
- by using internal criticism, N isn't persuading people according to the rhetorical power of his writing but according to reasons the Christian adopts

Example in an article by Siegfried Kracauer, "Photography" (p. 426)

- Goethe on a Rubens painting that has light coming from two opposing directions, contrary to nature
- this is an example of an artist who broke free from the tradition, from the dogmatic approach of how nature should be depicted & adopted what he considered to serve his purpose and belief in creating great works of art better

### **N's use of rhetorical strategies that appeal to affects**

- uses these to engage the critical agency of his readers, not just their responsiveness to reasons, and so preserves their freedom of spirit
- Not everyone can be a free spirit"; those who are not will respond to these rhetorical strategies with affects; those who are free spirits will have their demand for reasons stimulated (56)

### **Discussion questions**

1. Do you think N uses internal criticism? Do you think it's effective?
2. Besides internal criticism what are the ways in which N engages reader to become more self-reflective or change their minds in a specific way?
3. Do you agree that freedom of spirit is good in itself for Nietzsche? (e.g., is active critical agency absolutely essential to become N's SI or Übermensch?)

### *Class discussion on these questions*

Is it N's own view that the pursuit of truth necessarily requires suffering? Or is it the ascetic ideal that requires this? Isn't it the ascetic ideal that's incompatible with the Christian ideal of comfort?

-- presenter: yes, I think that's right

-- Do Christians really adhere to the desire to get rid of suffering, to be comfortable? Because N points out how they hold to the ascetic ideal, which is not really very comfortable.

-- Christians value life devoid of suffering; they value absolute truth as a way to get out of suffering, but this gives another kind of suffering, due to deprivation, a removal from something. One suffers from not having as opposed to suffering by being made to suffer. There's a problem with this b/c truth has to be won through not suffering but asceticism, denial, which Nietzsche doesn't like. He seems more favourable to suffering if you're actively doing something.

-- maybe the difference is doing something for me versus doing it for someone else, God, community, etc.

Is the free spirit someone who is free from the internal contradictions that N points out in the Christian morality?

-- presenter: yes, I think so—the person who holds the Christian morality should have considered before taking on any belief whether it coheres with their other beliefs

-- but do we really need all our beliefs to be coherent? Couldn't one still be the sovereign individual and have internal contradictions and clashes? I've still justified these values, but they aren't coherent together—can't we think that sovereign individual like that?

-- presenter: I think it's more about the attitude of being self-critical

-- Reginster says that the free spirit has to be continually looking into self for contradictions, not waiting for others to point out these contradictions to her

-- doesn't this suggest that the sovereign individual is a slave to rationality, then? Nietzsche hates Socrates because he's overly rational. When examining the world empirically, we don't necessarily get coherence across different domains, so if one is aiming for coherence, then one is pulling away from the empirical view of the world. The theorist wants to be internally consistent; the actor doesn't need to be, s/he is just going to do whatever works.

-- I think N is not rejecting rationality generally or the idea of giving reasons for one's views; the problem is that with the Christian the values are coming into contention with themselves

-- there are lots of different philosophical perspectives on the world, not all coherent with each other, and yet we find value in all of them

-- Maybe the point here is that the Christian wants to have internal coherence but the SI doesn't, and N is saying that the Christian doesn't have what s/he wants

-- but is the sovereign individual necessarily the same thing as the free spirit? It seems like they might be connected, but Reginster doesn't talk about SI here

Internal criticism is the only form that can bring about conversion of agent to a new way of seeing w/o violating her freedom of spirit, according to Reginster. In criticizing someone else, shouldn't badger them into changing because you're powerful; but if you can use internal criticism this doesn't harm their freedom of spirit. Doesn't mean they will necessarily change their mind, but it's not an imposition on them to do this because you're abiding by their own rules.

To some extent N just seems to be focusing on the problems with ideals being imposed on you from the outside, but does this mean there is an internal contradiction in Nietzsche's condemnation of the slave morality? The slaves were revolting against the imposed morality of the nobles. He does seem

- to say some good things about the slave revolt, so at least in the moment it was a good thing. But maybe it's later when it gets raised to the level of ascetic ideals that it becomes a problem.
- but did the nobles even have a morality? Feels like a pre-moral time. It's not that the slaves had values imposed upon them, so that they were throwing off earlier values. Rather, the nobles just were stronger and the slaves did whatever they could to have some degree of power. We could say the nobles had a value system, not a moral system. It's when we get good vs. evil instead of good vs. bad that morality comes in.
  - But in ancient Greek philosophy wasn't there already a system of morality? Response from someone else: no, not until Socrates. In ancient Greece, there are rules about what you should do that is fitting to your status, to the community, etc.—not so much internalized. More ritualistic. With morality, it feels like one is judging an individual in a deeper way than happened in ancient Greece.
  - What about Eastern ancient systems of values—weren't they “moral”? Still, N is focused on the slave revolt that is Jewish and Christian, not so much on what happened in other parts of the world. N's view seems to be Eurocentric, which means it's limited.
  - But why couldn't it have happened in various parts of the world that a stronger group creates values (not a morality) that others later overturn and create a morality out of it?
  - This has gotten to too much of historical question that we need empirical evidence for, so we can't answer it right now.

With the free spirit, does it seem like N is talking more about ethics than morality? Ethics as not rule-dependent, not having external sanctions being imposed upon you; your belief system that makes up your character.

- What N promotes with the free spirit is something like what Kant promotes in talking about “maturity” in “What is Enlightenment?”