

Contrary to his own claim, then, the account he gives in GS and BGE of the empirical world as merely apparent or illusory does presuppose the existence of a "true" or metaphysical world.

Nietzsche's representationalism plays the ultimate culprit in this tale. It is responsible for his continued denial of truth in GS and BGE and his failure to recognize that this denial required the positing of a "true" world. As I have argued, representationalism made idealism necessary once Nietzsche rejected the thing-in-itself, and that, in conjunction with his naturalized Kantian theory of knowledge, made the equation of reality with the chaos of sensations seem reasonable. This, in turn, seemed to provide a basis for considering illusory the nonchaotic world of which we have knowledge without committing him to a belief in a "true" world. But this position is vulnerable to the *reductio* Nietzsche himself explained in BGE 15.

Nietzsche needed a way out. The way out suggested by both BGE 15 and the interpretation I have offered is to reject representationalism. BGE 15 implies that Nietzsche cannot "study physiology with a good conscience," that is, base his account of knowledge on an empirical theory, unless he recognizes that the senses are not mere representations. Unless he wants to embrace an independently existing object hidden from knowledge by the representations—and thus be back with the thing-in-itself—he must therefore reject representationalism. This, I shall argue in the next chapter, is accomplished by Nietzsche's mature perspectivism.

PERSPECTIVAL TRUTH

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1. INTRODUCTION

One of Nietzsche's most influential ideas, finding great resonance also in recent decades, is his perspectivism. In various respects about which I shall seek to gain greater clarity here, what Nietzsche has to say under this heading has been seen as in accord with the concerns of contemporary anti-realist or pragmatist philosophers and as anticipating their claims. Indeed, it has even been said that "there is scarcely anything in any of these [contemporary] arguments against the possibility of absolute representations that cannot be found somewhere, in some form, in Nietzsche."¹ On this reading, a version of which I shall develop in Sections 2 and 3 of this paper, what Nietzsche's perspectivism centrally involves is the rejection of a certain construal of our epistemic practices as ideally engaging with and mapping reality, or parts or structural features of it, as these are *anyway*, independently of any *point of view*. In contrast to this, Nietzsche is said to maintain that all non-formal or non-conceptual truth is perspectival—hence there is no absolute material truth about the actual world. Many of his utterances suggest or indeed explicitly state some such claim. The caveat should, however, immediately be added that these utterances conflict with others, occasionally even within the same note or passage, which in some cases seem to deny not only the possibility of absolute truth, but of truth *tout court*. While I shall not pursue in detail here this (to my mind unrewarding) apparent line of thinking in Nietzsche, I shall address the important question of the significance of there being some conflicting assertions on this topic in his work at the end of the paper.²

¹ A. W. Moore, *Points of View* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 103.

² Brian Leiter has shown clearly how those popular interpretations of Nietzsche which privilege remarks by him that on a literal interpretation seem to negate the possibility of truth altogether not only entangle him in insuperable self-referential paradoxes, but are also in conflict with the great majority of his own utterances and concerns. Leiter makes a powerful case—both textually and philosophically—for abandoning such self-stultifying interpretations. See Brian Leiter, "Perspectivism in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*," in Richard Schacht (ed.), *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994).

It is not difficult to find statements denying the possibility of absolute truth about the world in the notebooks of the 1880s:³

appearance as I understand it is the genuine and sole reality of things—that to which all existing predicates apply and which is relatively best described by means of all, that is also by contradictory predicates . . . So I do not oppose 'appearance' to 'reality' but, on the contrary, regard appearance as the reality which resists any transmutation into an imaginary 'true world'. . . . (KGW VII. 3. 40. 53)

The perspective therefore decides the character of the 'appearance'! As if a world would still remain over after one deducted the perspectival! By doing that one would deduct relativity! (WP 567)⁴

The 'reality of things', that which all our representations of particulars are about, is said to be essentially apparent (*Schein*), while appearances in turn are claimed to be essentially perspectival. Thus, the reason why there is 'only a perspectival "knowing"' (GM III. 12) is, according to these notebook passages, that the object of knowledge—the world—is itself perspectival. It is the perspectival character of reality which requires any true representations of its essential characteristics to be perspectival. In order to assess this idea and indeed properly to grasp its import we first of all need to get clearer about what the term 'perspectival' means here. Since it is used, in the much quoted passage from *On the Genealogy of Morals* (GM III. 12), as qualifying representations, and since this is also its most common use in contemporary discussions, we initially need to ask: what is a perspectival representation?

We should distinguish perspectival representations from those whose contents turn out, on reflection, to be essentially relative to a specific cognitive equipment, or to be constituted by their aptness to elicit specific cognitive responses from knowers of certain types. For example, the Lockean secondary qualities such as colour are plausibly understood as knower-relative or response-dependent in this sense. For something to be scarlet is, arguably, for

³ I shall make free use of Nietzsche's notebook material, some of which is collected in *The Will to Power*. Most of his reflections on epistemological and metaphysical issues are contained in the notebooks, while the relatively scarce remarks on these topics in the published works tend to be much more condensed and often highly elliptical or allusive. The main reason for this public reticence is arguably Nietzsche's central concern to emancipate philosophical discussion from a paradigm in which epistemological and metaphysical questions are seen as of primary or even exclusive importance (see Sect. 4 below). The philosophical justification for the use of the *Nachlass* clearly should not rest on Nietzsche's own final judgement on it—even were it available—but on its intrinsic philosophical value, and this can only be established through a detailed and informed engagement with it.

⁴ The same point is made in BGE 34, GS 54, WP 556, 560, 569. But see GS 374 for a more tentative formulation. Translations from Nietzsche's works are my own, except those from WP, which are by R. J. Hollingdale and W. Kaufmann. *Nachlass* fragments not in WP will be quoted from G. Colli and M. Montinari (eds.), *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGW), by division, volume, notebook, and fragment number, in this order.

it to be such as to look scarlet to beings with the relevant cognitive apparatus—that in fact possessed by standard human perceivers as they actually are—in certain substantively specified conditions of observation. The best philosophical account of secondary qualities like scarlet may be one which construes them as constitutively response-dependent in this sense. The general idea is that in order to characterize them adequately we need to make reference to the possible cognitive responses of subjects of some kind or other. When Nietzsche speaks in one passage of 'this perspectival world, this world for the eye, tongue, and ear' (WP 602), he might be thought to be using 'perspectival' in just this sense, and the claim that the truth about the world is essentially perspectival would then need to be understood as asserting the non-detachability of our true representations of the world from the concepts of (some) secondary qualities. While a few of Nietzsche's remarks may perhaps, with some stretching, be fitted into this Berkeleyan mould (e.g. WP 563–4), this is clearly not his main point. One reason for this may be that secondary qualities are not *manifestly* knower-relative. They do not, so to speak, wear their response-dependence on their sleeves, but rather stand-ardly appear to us as non-dispositional, intrinsic features of things. Nothing about the appearance of scarlet marks it out as essentially perceiver-relative or for that matter as a dispositional property. Its essential perceiver-relativity is a feature of it which we attribute to it, if we do, as a result of theoretical reflection and, in many cases, as a result of a certain metaphysics (for example, one according to which secondary qualities as they appear cannot be thought of as causes). When Nietzsche speaks of the perspectivalness of representations or, more often, of 'knowledge', his examples and analogies are usually rather different, and mostly of two kinds:

1. the manifestly perspectival character of spatial, especially visual, perception;
2. the perspectival nature of what he variously calls interests, valuations, or (affective) concerns.

In one of the main statements of this idea in the published works both of these aspects are present:

Let us guard . . . better from now on against that dangerous old conceptual fiction which assumed a 'pure, will-less, painless, atemporal subject of knowledge', let us guard against the snares of such contradictory concepts as 'pure reason', 'absolute spirituality', 'knowledge in itself'; here one is always asked to think of an eye that is inconceivable, an eye that is supposed to have no direction at all, where the active and interpreting forces through which alone seeing becomes a seeing of something are supposed to be suspended or lacking . . . There is *only* a perspectival seeing, *only* a perspectival 'knowing'; and the *more* affects we allow to have their say on a matter, the *more* eyes, different eyes we know how to use for the same thing,

the more comprehensive will be our 'concept' of the thing, our 'objectivity' (GM III. 12)

In the following section I shall focus on the sense of 'perspective' in which the word applies to visual perception, although the import of Nietzsche's argument is clearly not restricted to this specific sensory modality. The conclusion of this argument will be seen to be that actual spatio-temporal objects without characteristics marking them as represented are impossible (the thesis of essential representation-dependence, ERD). The evaluative component of perspectivism, referred to in (2) above, will be addressed in Section 3. It will turn out to comprise three conceptual theses: (1) all representations are dependent on interests; (2) affectivity and the experience of volitional agency are conditions of the possibility of a self-world distinction; (3) what can count as objectively real for us is essentially related, in a manner to be explained, to our actual dominant interests or concerns (the thesis of essential interest-dependence, EID). The plausibility of thesis (3) will be seen to depend on the argument discussed in Section 2, while theses (1) and (2) are entirely independent of this. In Section 4, an alternative, metaphysically indifferent, reading of perspectivism will be presented which is in principle compatible with the anti-realist interpretation developed in Sections 2 and 3, and which has affinities with elements of both the pragmatist and phenomenological traditions.⁵

2. THE ESSENTIAL PERSPECTIVALNESS OF SPATIAL OBJECTS⁶

To say that visual perception is essentially perspectival or from a point of view means in part that, necessarily, its objects are arranged in a gestalt around the point of origin of the visual field. The space of visual perception is thus an oriented or 'egocentric' one.⁶ Things show up in visual perception in ways which might adequately be expressed, for example, as 'about three feet away', 'sloping gently into the background to the right', 'behind and

⁵ The positions attributed to Nietzsche here can be found in the *Nachlass* from (at least) 1881 until 1888, i.e. the final year of Nietzsche's philosophical activity. In the published works of the 1880s only the claims discussed in Sect. 4 and theses (1-2) of Sect. 3 are fairly unambiguously stated (in HH 9 and TI IV, and GM III. 12, respectively). There is also some evidence in the published works for ERD (GS 54; BGE 16, 34). But these published statements are somewhat vague and general, and thus allow for a rather broad range of interpretations if read in isolation from the more specific formulations in the pertinent fragments of the notebooks.

⁶ See Gareth Evans, *The Varieties of Reference* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 151-2. The term 'egocentric' should not be taken to imply that the representing *subject* figures itself necessarily among the contents of the perceptual state.

partly covered by the tree in the middle of the foreground', 'on top of the shelf over *there*', 'moving slowly towards me', 'rising more steeply in *this* direction', 'flat over here', and so forth. Such locutions and many others carrying a reference to the point of origin of a visual field⁷ attempt to express that aspect of the contents of visual perception which is its perspectivalness. A *purely perspectival* content is one in which there is no explicit relativization to one particular point of view *among others*, e.g. 'The Matterhorn is straight ahead', while a *partly perspectival* content is one which presupposes a point of view (and thus purely perspectival contents), but the latter is relativized, i.e. represented as itself occupying a position on a (relatively) more objective map, e.g. 'The Matterhorn is straight ahead from where Jones is currently standing, relative to his axis of vision'. A *non-perspectival* or *absolute* spatial representation would be one whose content contained no egocentric components at all. Now one way of drawing the distinction between perspectival and absolute representations would be this: absolute representations—if there are any—are simply additive in the sense that all true absolute representations are compatible with each other and can in principle be recognized to be so without needing to deploy a different type or level of representation. By contrast, pure perspectival representations can be true but incompatible. For example, the assertions 'The Matterhorn is straight ahead' and 'The Matterhorn is on the extreme left' can both be true, but they are incompatible unless relativized to different times or different synchronic points of view (and thus no longer purely perspectival).⁸ While this way of making the distinction draws attention to one mark of difference, one may feel that it does not so much explain it as stand itself in need of explanation.⁹ A promising explanatory approach would seem to be this. An absolute representation of some spatial state of affairs would have to be one in which the manner of representation does not ineliminably qualify the object represented. Since an absolute representation would have to represent the object as being from *no* point of view, it obviously would have to represent it as, precisely, not implying any point of view on it. Hence the object would have to be characterized as independent of any aspect of its being represented. But what is distinctive of purely perspectival representations as illustrated earlier is that the manner of representation explicitly qualifies the

⁷ The reference is often implicit, i.e. the point of origin (or zero point of orientation) is often not itself thematically represented.

⁸ Moore, *Points of View*, 9-14.

⁹ As Nietzsche remarks: 'To reduce something unfamiliar to something already familiar, to lose the feeling of strangeness—this is what *counts* as explaining for our sensibility' (KGW VIII. 3. 34. 246).

entire object of representation.¹⁰ It is because the objects themselves here are transparently qualified as represented that we can come to understand, once we attain a more detached or comprehensive perspective in which there is room for the idea of *different* points of view, how each of these representations may be true and thus not really be incompatible while appearing to be so when merely confronted with each other.¹¹ For example, we easily understand why two perceptual contents A and B can both be true, although incompatible if entertained at the same time from the same point of view, as soon as we grant that A and B are presenting their respective objects as *represented objects*. If two thoughts A and B present their objects as representation-*independent*, then it is mysterious how they could both be incompatible and jointly true, but the mystery disappears as soon as we assume that their objects are given as represented. A prior grasp, however inexplicit or undeveloped, of what a representation and a point of view is would thus seem to be needed to make sense of the claim that perspectival representations are non-additive. This leaves us with the suggestion that a representation's being (purely) perspectival is most clearly understood by us as involving the idea that some aspect of the *mode* of representation here qualifies *what* is being represented—the object or referent of the representation. To say, then, that 'all truth about the world is perspectival' would on this construal amount to the claim that, necessarily, all true thoughts (beliefs, etc.) about the world represent it as represented. This is, in fact, precisely the form in which Nietzsche casts the question when pondering whether 'the perspectival is of the essence':

Basic question: whether the *perspectival* is of the *essence*? Rather than just being a form of viewing it, a relation between different beings? Are the various forces in relation such that this relation is bound up with a perceptual aspect (*Wahrnehmungs-Optik*)? (KGW VIII. 1. 5. 12)

What is here and in GS 374 phrased as a question is emphatically asserted in other notes:

The question 'what is that?' is an imposition of sense from some other point of view. 'Essence', the 'essential nature', is something perspectival and already presupposes a multiplicity . . . In short: the essence of a thing is only a *belief* about the 'thing'. Or rather: 'it is considered' is the real 'it is', the sole 'this is'. (WP 556; cf. WP 567)

¹⁰ A manner or mode of presentation (MP) in the logically primary sense is of course not itself an object, neither a particular (real) nor an abstract (ideal) one. It is rather an aspect (or better, a 'moment') of a state of representing. It is only secondarily or derivatively that MPs can become objects of thought. This happens, for example, in the thought expressed by 'I believe that *Nietzsche is the author of Thus Spoke Zarathustra*'. Here the italicised clause refers to an MP (or sense), which has thus been modified into an object of thought. The idea that senses in their primary manifestations are objects is a central deficiency of Frege's philosophy of intentionality.

¹¹ Cf. John Richardson, *Nietzsche's System* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 279.

Perhaps Nietzsche's thought is phrased most concisely in a formulation from another notebook which, while written somewhat earlier (1881), corresponds closely to many later remarks and can thus plausibly be read as making the same point:

To think away the subject—that is to represent the world without a subject: is a contradiction: to represent without representation. (KGW V. 1. 10. D82; see WP 560 for a later formulation)

Let us first attempt to get clear about the position that is rejected in this remark as incoherent. We may call it *strong realism*: there are some entities, including some particulars, whose existence and properties do not in any way depend on the existence of knowing subjects and their representations of them. They, or their essential characteristics, are not constituted by or otherwise non-contingently dependent on our or any other subjects' beliefs, concepts, or theories. Let us call them, therefore, *absolute objects*. It is such absolute objects which absolute representations seek to represent. The impossibility of absolute truth is thus introduced by Nietzsche as a consequence of the impossibility ('contradiction') of absolute objects—objects as putatively conceived by strong realism. We may notice here a general feature of Nietzsche's reflections on this topic. If we examine the actual arguments he himself adduces, we find that they tend not to be based on claims about the logical, second-order concept of truth, but on views about certain fundamental ontological (first-order) concepts, in particular *object*, *subject*, and *essence*.¹² This constitutes an important difference from many contemporary anti-realisms. Implicit in this Nietzschean approach is the not unreasonable assumption that our grip on such first-level concepts, while still far from unproblematic due to their abstract, formal character, is nevertheless stronger and more reliable than our corresponding 'intuitions' about the yet further removed second-order logical or semantic concepts. Minimally, then, we may take Nietzsche to be claiming in the remarks quoted above that (ERD) it is incoherent to suppose that there are or could be actual, particular (spatio-temporal) objects ('things') without characteristics that mark them out as represented.

This thesis of *essential representation-dependence* (ERD) is the first half of Nietzsche's perspectivism. The last remark quoted (KGW V. 1. 10. D82) and WP 560 actually go further. According to these passages, we cannot 'think away' the *subject* when thinking of or perceiving an object. Now, it would be

¹² I therefore largely concur with one sense of Ken Gemes's observation that 'Nietzsche has nothing to say on the notion of truth itself' ('Nietzsche's Critique of Truth', Ch. 1 in this volume, p. 56.) While Gemes is perhaps overstating the point, it is true that there is indeed no sustained analysis of the concept of truth in Nietzsche's later writings.

manifestly implausible to argue that in any representation of an object the representing subject is co-represented. Clearly there can be (for example) conscious perceptions of objects without any *self*-consciousness on the part of the perceiver. Similarly, when (say) visualizing a scene, one can visualize it without representing either oneself or any other subject from whose point of view the scene is visualized. The subject need not be part of what is visualized in visualizing the scene.¹³ It is rather more plausible as well as more fruitful to take Nietzsche's point here to be that every representation of an object implies a subject while not necessarily co-representing it. Why this should be so and exactly what it means is a question I should like to defer until I have explicated the second main component of Nietzsche's perspectivism (Section 3). For the moment I shall adopt a minimal reading of the passages under discussion, articulated in ERD.

Why should one accept ERD? One of Nietzsche's own formulations *prima facie* invites a comparison with Berkeley's notorious argument that it is 'a contradiction to talk of conceiving a thing which is unconceived' since 'the tree or house . . . which you think of' as 'existing by itself, independent of . . . any mind whatsoever' is after all 'conceived by you'.¹⁴ If this argument were sound, it would entail rather more than Berkeley wanted, namely that no one can conceive of a thing which he has never thought of. As Brentano and many critics since have pointed out, the basic flaw of Berkeley's reasoning here lies in the absence of a distinction between the *act* of conceiving, the *object* conceived, and the object *as* conceived.¹⁵ If, then, Nietzsche's thinking behind ERD is different, what is it? It relies ultimately on a certain conception of what it is to think of—to represent or conceive* of—a particular. Nietzsche has a strong and unwavering commitment to a broadly empiricist conception of thought which implies that the contents of (at least) all non-logical, object-referring¹⁶ terms are dependent, either immediately or indirectly, on a sensory or quasi-sensory acquaintance with particulars. He often remarks that our ability to 'understand' either is or depends upon an ability to reduce or to derive the items to be understood from something with which we are familiar or acquainted (*bekannt*) (e.g. GS 355; KGW VIII. 1. 5. 10). The most direct evidence that the cognitive relation in

¹³ Bernard Williams, 'Imagination and the Self', in his *Problems of the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 34–7. Williams also makes the further clearly correct point that in visualizing something one need not visualize it *as seen*, i.e. as actually perceived, rather than, for example, as imagined.

¹⁴ George Berkeley, *Three Dialogues between Hylas and Philonous*, in his *Philosophical Works*, ed. M. R. Ayers (London: Dent, 1993), 190.

¹⁵ Franz Brentano, *Psychology from an Empirical Standpoint* (London: Routledge, 1973), 93.

¹⁶ 'Object' is here used in a broad sense covering particulars (including property exemplifications) and abstract or ideal objects, if there are any.

question is to be interpreted along broadly empiricist lines as involving an experiential acquaintance with particulars can be found in Nietzsche's remarks on causal explanations and the explanatory paradigm of Newtonian science. Here he characterizes the covering law model of explanation, at least at the basic level, as 'descriptive', and expresses scepticism concerning our 'comprehension' of the events subsumed under mathematical, functional laws (e.g. GS 112; WP 624). Adequate comprehension, he claims, would require an acquaintance with the causal powers involved, with the 'compulsion' (WP 664) which we believe to bring about or necessitate a given effect. Yet, according to some notes, we have no such comprehension because we lack a relevant 'experience' (*Erfahrung*) whose content could legitimately be attributed, even if only by analogy, to processes in the external world (*ibid.*).¹⁷ Elsewhere he continues this line of thought, observing that the term 'force' remains an 'empty word' if we cannot 'imagine' the 'quality' it purportedly refers to (WP 621; also WP 660, 689). For Nietzsche, then, the intelligibility of (at least) non-logical verbal signs ultimately derives either from experiences of particulars to which they apply, or their meanings must be analysable into components for which this is the case, or else what the sign is about must be 'imaginable'. I take him to mean by the latter expression that, for any intelligible object-referring symbol, it must at least be possible to envisage an instantiation of what is expressed by it by way of (possibly remote) material analogy with items of which we can be aware through sensory or quasi-sensory 'experience'.

Thus when Nietzsche says that 'to represent [an object] without representation' is a 'contradiction' we can plausibly interpret this as the claim that it is impossible to conceive of—to imagine—an object that is not conceived of as qualified by characteristics which mark it as a represented object, hence as a perspectival object. But an object we cannot conceive, so we may extrapolate from his remarks on force, is no more than an empty word. This need not imply that all genuine representing or understanding has to be of a disengaged or contemplative kind. There is no reason why Nietzsche should deny that certain signs or marks which bear no relevant resemblance to the objects conceived (e.g. a linguistic inscription), and which function simply to effect certain practical, behavioural adjustments to one's environment, may also (granted certain further conditions) count as ways of representing aspects of that environment. This should be uncontroversial at least for those cases where the behaviour prompted is not entirely devoid of

¹⁷ It should be emphasized that these 'sceptical' notes concerning our adequate comprehension of causality are contradicted by other passages (e.g. WP 689). This is one of the central areas of ambiguity in Nietzsche's later thought. Cf. my *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 36–46.

phenomenal awareness of the environment.¹⁸ However, Nietzsche would certainly have to deny that a complex consisting of (say) a sign-stimulus and resultant behavioural adjustment devoid of any relevant awareness can count as an adequate conception of what the signs are about—adequate, that is, for the purpose of considering questions at a highly theoretical level about the ontological status or structure of objecthood as such.

It is still unclear, however, why it is that in an adequate conception of an object the mode of conception should essentially qualify the object conceived. The answer to this must presumably be sought in the close relation that obtains between *imagining* and *perceiving*. (Remember Nietzsche's formulation, in KGW VIII. 1. 5. 12, of the perspectivist thesis in terms of an essential 'perceptual' relativity adhering to any object of representation.) While imagining an object is not necessarily imagining it as perceived, what it has in common with perceiving is that it includes components which are egocentric or perspectival in the sense elucidated earlier. For example, when I visually imagine the Matterhorn, I imagine it as from some point of view or as from a succession of such points. (I may represent it, say, as one would see it from an aeroplane circling around it.) This characteristic is obviously not restricted to the modality of vision. When one represents an abstract sculpture in a tactile mode, its contours will be presented as quasi-resistances to a tactile approach from a certain direction and angle, or successively from a series of such. Thus in both the as-if-visual and the as-if-tactile cases of envisaging the exemplification of certain properties, what is envisaged will be given as having various egocentric (perspectival) features, such as 'curving away to the right', 'jutting out in *this* direction from the horizontal plane', etc. But can't these perspectival features of the representation be discounted or abstracted from in one's imaginative project? After all, it is often the case that, when we envisage some state of affairs, our representation of it will contain elements which we do not attribute to the object envisaged. When I visually imagine a landscape, my visual image may be blurry or fragmentary, but I do not attribute blurriness or fragmentariness to the landscape envisaged. While we can thus quite intelligibly specify the absence of certain features of one's representation from the objects represented, this is, according to Nietzsche, not possible for

¹⁸ I am thinking here especially of the kind of practical intentionality Heidegger calls 'circum-spect handling' (*umsichtiges Besorgen*) of what is 'available' (*zuhanden*). See, for a good explication of this, Hubert Dreyfus, *Being-in-the-World* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991), 60–87. Cf. also John Campbell's analysis of 'working concepts' and causally indexical thoughts in his *Past, Space and Self* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1994), 42–51. The practical modes of understanding described by Heidegger and Campbell clearly do not detract from Nietzsche's point, since they both involve a sort of 'envisaging' of what the corresponding linguistic expressions are about (e.g. when following the instruction 'Do it like *this*').

those features which he calls their perspectivalness. This is the clear implication of his rhetorical exclamation: 'As if a world would still remain over after one deducted the perspective!' (WP 567). 'Perspective' here refers to the specific manner in which any spatio-temporal object or its properties are presented in an adequate mode of conceiving which goes beyond 'empty words' by modelling itself, however remotely or analogously, on sense perception. Hence Nietzsche in one passage revealingly calls perspectivalness 'only a complex form of specificity' (WP 637)—the very form of specificity, that is, which also characterizes perception. There is, then, an asymmetry between this 'form of specificity' and the specific properties exemplifications of which may well be components of a quasi-perceptual conception of an object while not being attributed to the object conceived. When we 'deduct' the perspectivalness from our representation—unlike when we discount (say) its fragmentariness—the object does not remain over: the 'representation' ceases to represent any possible particular. Hence the incoherent nature of such an attempt to 'represent without representation'.

Among the objections to be expected against this Nietzschean argument two are likely to be prominent. Even if one grants for the moment Nietzsche's move (to be considered below) from inconceivability, in his sense, to impossibility, this only shows, it may be said, that those aspects of objective reality which can be given a strong realist interpretation are not of the kind which could even in principle be adequately conceived by means of a kind of thinking which stands to sense perception in anything like the relation that obtains between visualizing and seeing. In other words, what is objectively real in the strong realist sense is not the sort of item that could in principle be an object of sense perception for some creature suitably positioned in time and space and with a suitable sensory apparatus¹⁹—which means that it cannot be or actualize itself as a quality. The classical candidates for such non-qualitative, putatively absolute properties are certain abstract structural ones, for example quantitative relations of functional co-variation, which we have good reasons to believe are exemplified in physical objects and processes. Granted for now that these properties can themselves be conceived non-perspectivally, is the idea that representation-independent objective reality might consist exclusively of such quantitative relations—the numbers here not being regarded as indices for qualities—an intelligible one? Well, not unless one is prepared to countenance the idea that objective reality is itself neither spatio-temporal nor capable of exercising causal power and hence obsolete for

¹⁹ Cf. Colin McGinn, *The Subjective View* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), 80–2, 111 ff.

causally explaining our knowledge of it. It is difficult not to agree with Nietzsche when he dismisses this view briskly: 'The reduction of all qualities to quantities is nonsense' (WP 564).

The second main objection is likely to concern Nietzsche's move from our inability to 'understand', in his sense, the idea of non-perspectival objects, to their impossibility. This modal claim is certainly to be interpreted as asserting more than a merely physical impossibility dependent on the obtaining of contingent laws of nature. What is at issue is rather an impossibility as strong as that attaching to the denial of conceptual or logical truths. This is evident not only from his talk about 'contradiction' in the notebook passage from 1881, it emerges just as clearly from many later remarks in which he unambiguously states that concepts like *thing*, *object*, and *essence* are 'relational', and that the kind of relation involved is a representational one (e.g. WP 555-6, 560, 562, 568, 583; KGW VIII. 1. 5. 19). In several of these remarks, as well as in other passages, this point is explicitly linked by him to a rejection of what he calls things-in-themselves. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that what he means by 'things-in-themselves' here are (at least) objects of the sort postulated by strong realism.²⁰ actual object-like items

²⁰ A quite different interpretation of Nietzsche's critique of 'things-in-themselves' has been proposed by Maudemarie Clark in her *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). According to her, Nietzsche, at least from 1887 onwards, holds a 'common sense realism', acknowledging that many things are actual and exemplify certain properties although they are not actually and may never be represented. This implies that we have an idea of the obtaining of a state of affairs which does not involve reference to concepts, beliefs, theories, or other representations (p. 45). What Nietzsche's dismissal of the thing-in-itself rejects is only the following two propositions: (1) there might be real items which cannot be known by any conceivable knower, whatever their cognitive capacities; (2) a theory which ideally satisfies the best possible human standards of rational acceptability might fail to be true (pp. 44-50). Among these best standards are comprehensiveness, coherence, predictive success (pp. 48, 86). Now it would be easy to define an appropriate idealization of Clark's standard of comprehensiveness over sets of beliefs, according to which the best possible theory to be aspired to by us (our regulative ideal) is one which, besides satisfying various other standards, includes existentially quantified propositions representing all states of affairs conceivable by a being with idealized cognitive capacities (Clark's theory allows for such an idealization of cognitive capacities). Clearly, no actual singular state of affairs could in principle remain beyond the reach of a theory which satisfied this standard. It thus emerges that the denial of (2) in fact places no additional constraints at all on what can be the case, and Nietzsche's rejection of things in themselves as read by Clark consequently amounts to no more than the denial of (1). In several places she seems to acknowledge this (pp. 50, 102). But, as she herself remarks, it is 'not clear that anyone' has ever subscribed to (1) anyway (p. 47). Kant certainly did not, for Kant's thing-in-itself is knowable by a possible (conceivable) knower, namely by a being with intellectual intuition. Clark's reading thus has the peculiar consequence that Nietzsche's critique of the thing-in-itself would not affect Kant's own concept of it. But it is surely one of the few unambiguous contents of the passage she regards as the main evidence for her reading (TI IV) that Kant's concept of the thing-in-itself is rejected in it. As far as the textual warrant for Clark's interpretation is concerned, we shall see in Sect. 4 that the explicit wording of TI IV is incompatible with it.

without characteristics marking them as represented.²¹ Even if one concedes Nietzsche's point about the inconceivability, by means of representations having sensory or quasi-sensory intuitive content, of particulars without perspectival properties, why should this imply their impossibility? Why should the limits of conceivability in this sense coincide with the limits of what is metaphysically possible rather than merely indicating a psychological inability on our part? When Nietzsche says that the notion of a thing-in-itself is a 'contradiction in terms' (BGE 16), his response to this objection is, in effect, that there is no relevant asymmetry here to the belief that a state of affairs represented by a proposition of the form 'fx and not-(fx)' is impossible. What reason have we for believing that a calculus which contains the law of non-contradiction should unrestrictedly apply to this and every possible world, such that a sequence of symbols of the above form, with its variables interpreted, respectively, to range over individuals-at-a-time and monadic properties, is 'necessarily' false? Is it not that we find it simply utterly perplexing to combine the component meanings, the better we come to understand them, in the manner we are asked to combine them? When we attempt to comprehend what is said in a proposition of this form, we simply cannot imagine any arrangement of the world it might describe. This 'cannot' indicates, however, not merely an ordinary imaginative *lack* or limitation (a 'privation')—as when I say that I cannot visualize a chiliagon. In that sort of case, it is easy to think of a being with much greater imaginative powers who can perform the feat in question. In the present instance, by contrast, the 'cannot' signifies a *positive* characteristic of my cognitive attempt which *increases* as my grasp of the meaning components improves and which terminates in utter perplexity and incomprehension, so that I cannot make sense of the suggestion that a being without my contingent cognitive limitations might actually be able to imagine the contradictory state of affairs.²² There is no significant difference, Nietzsche suggests, between one's grasp of impossibility in such a case and the perplexity one encounters when attempting to comprehend the idea of an actual, non-perspectival, spatio-temporal object.

²¹ Some of his remarks in the notebooks indicate that this is not all he means by 'thing-in-itself'. He occasionally concludes from the incoherence of the idea of non-relational (non-perspectival) objects to the incoherence of the notion of something's having a 'constitution in itself', i.e. purely intrinsic properties. It should, however, be stressed that this move can be found only in a few places in the notebooks (e.g. WP 558-9). I have discussed and criticized it in *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, 109-11 and 281-4.

²² See also Simon Blackburn, *Spreading the Word* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 216-17. For a more elaborate statement, especially of the last point concerning the crucial difference between the 'unimaginability' relevant here and contingently varying ordinary imaginative limitations, see Edmund Husserl, *Logical Investigations*, trans. J. N. Findlay (London: Routledge, 1970), *Sixth Investigation*, §§30-5, ii. 749-59.

One way of seeking to resist this conclusion might be this. An anti-perspectivist may concede that we cannot adequately conceive of the intrinsic properties of a non-perspectival object as they are in themselves. This is so because our conception of its qualitative specificity is bound to be closely related to how the object appears or can appear to a perceptual awareness, and it seems to be a conceptual truth that any perceptual awareness is perspectival—in the sense of, from a point of view *on* the object—involving an (at least apparent) interaction, that is, a relation between the object and the knower. But could we not say that, since perception and any mode of conceiving ultimately based on it ('imagining') can thus only present us with *effects* of the object's intrinsic nature, that nature as it is in itself is in principle inaccessible to such modes of conceiving. If we also wish to retain at least a residue of meaning empiricism with its characteristic view of what it is to have an adequate conception of something, it would seem to follow that the intrinsic properties of a non-perspectival object are not adequately conceivable as they are in themselves, but only as they affect knowing subjects. Nevertheless, the argument might continue, *what* we are acquainted with in sense perception is (in part) intrinsic, non-perspectival properties, although we can only in principle be acquainted with them in a perspectival mode of presentation.

For the Nietzschean perspectivist, this solution would be a merely verbal one. Given that our concepts are constituted by their cognitive roles and the latter are essentially dependent on the modes in which the items falling under the concepts are or can be presented, it would still follow that we have no concepts of *non-perspectival objects as they are in themselves*, and that we therefore fail to grasp any coherent sense in the italicized phrase. It is unclear whether Nietzsche would accept the theoretical possibility of a sort of *via negativa*, i.e. of a demonstration by a priori argument both that among the ultimate furniture of the universe there must be items with causal powers and that not all of them can be perspectival. In any case, no such argument commanding reasonably widespread assent has yet been forthcoming.

3. AFFECTIVITY AS A CONDITION OF KNOWLEDGE OF THE REAL

Apart from drawing on visual perception, Nietzsche's examples of the alleged perspectivalness of all representations of a spatio-temporal world often emphasize their evaluative or interest-based character and the way in which they are constitutively related to the 'will'. Cognition is said to depend on 'will' and on 'affects' (GM III. 12), interests (WP 588), 'valuations' (WP

616, 675), and 'concerns' (WP 555; KGW VIII. 1. 5. 19), in short, on acts or states which belong to the affective and appetitive sphere. However, it is not a simple task to determine the scope of the claims that are being made or suggested by Nietzsche in this connection. The *prima facie* defensible possibilities of interpretation here range from ascribing to him relatively uncontroversial considerations concerning the interest-dependence of all classification and conceptualization to much stronger theses. I shall argue that there is sufficient, clear, textual evidence for attributing to him three thoughts of increasing strength and radicality: (1) all representations are interest-dependent; (2) the distinction between self and external, objective reality presupposes affectivity and the experience of volitional agency; (3) what can count as objectively real for us is essentially related to our dominant interests or concerns.

1. The claim that all representations are interest-dependent is explicitly stated in GM III. 12. Brian Leiter, in his careful reading of this passage, formulates it as follows: 'Necessarily, we know an object from a particular perspective: that is, from the standpoint of particular interests and needs.'²³ This a priori truth applies both at the level of our experiential encounter with the world and at more theoretical levels of representing it. Thus any perceptual representation of an object requires more than merely exposure to the environmental array and a passive receiving of data from it. What is needed for the representation of an object is a selective focusing on some of these data which only through such attentional 'interest' become available for potential future representations and thus for the constitution of an *object* of representation. If the context of perception is a dynamic one—e.g. a moving object—my representing it requires me to direct my attentional interest to a feature of my environment in a dynamic way—in other words, I need to *track* the object. As Nietzsche observes, those who maintain the possibility of a purely passive ('will-less') subject of knowledge ask of us 'to think of an eye that is inconceivable, an eye that is supposed to have no direction at all, where the active and interpreting powers through which alone seeing becomes a seeing of something are supposed to be suspended or lacking' (GM III. 12).

At the level of descriptive classifications of the world and of the theories (including our everyday conceptualizations) through which we articulate our understanding of it, there is an equally ineliminable involvement of interests. Which features we select in grouping worldly items depends clearly on our purposes, and the world does not prescribe any system of classification which subjects of knowledge are rationally compelled to adopt irrespective

²³ Leiter, 'Perspectivism in Nietzsche's *Genealogy of Morals*', 345.

of what their classification-guiding interests might be. For creatures like ourselves the prediction of events is a central interest and many of our classificatory concepts (especially in science) are governed by this interest. But we can think of creatures for whom this is not a dominant interest and who classify things according to quite different criteria. In many contexts our criteria of classification are provided by what strike us, owing to our attention-based noticing of some aspects rather than others, as phenomenal similarities. Often such similarities are by no means evident to the uninitiated observer and rather require a technical training (think of the stylistic classifications in the visual arts or in music theory). The world does not prescribe 'correct' classifications, no matter what the purposes of the classifiers may be, and these purposes themselves cannot be adjudicated between (as more or less 'rational', say) independently of what subjects are disposed to find most worth while and important to them. No classifications and no theories making use of them are thus intrinsically better, more adequate, or more appropriate independently of the purposes they serve, nor is any classification or theory thinkable which is not governed by any purposes at all.²⁴ None of these claims is likely to be found controversial, unless one believes in values or norms which impose obligations on subjects irrespective of whether they are disposed to recognize them as such. Nor do any of these claims imply that the *objects* represented or their properties are themselves constituted by or dependent on the interests of human or other subjects of knowledge.

2. In GM III. 12 Nietzsche diagnoses the idea of a 'will-less subject of knowledge' as a 'conceptual fiction' and adds that a putative awareness of the world in which 'active . . . powers' are supposed to be lacking or neutralized is an 'incoherence' (*Widersinn*). Now if a will-less subject cannot represent anything as anything at all, then it is unclear that it could still be regarded as a subject. In other words, Nietzsche is here also making a point about necessary conditions of subjectivity or selfhood. It is a thought familiar from the Kantian tradition that subjectivity—in a sense which requires the possibility of experiences being ascribed by a self to itself—demands

²⁴ One's epistemology will rationally vary in accordance with the purposes co-constituting different areas of inquiry. The method for knowing about how to predict phenomena will clearly be different from the method(s) for knowing about (say) the aesthetic properties objects appear as having, and these methods in turn will differ from the ways in which one best learns about *other* interest-involving perspectives. If different regions of inquiry require different methodologies, and if human cognitive capacities are finite, it follows that the very interests which disclose one aspect of reality to us will tend to occlude another. For example, if one's cognitive engagement with the world is guided by an interest in smoothly manipulating things, the dominance of the type of cognitive effort needed for this will tend to interfere proportionally with one's ability to understand other perspectives with other guiding interests. For an illuminating discussion of these issues and of Nietzsche's own guiding interests, see Richardson, *Nietzsche's System*, 264–80.

that representations be interpretable in specific ways. In particular, it has often been claimed that for self-consciousness to be possible a subject must be able to interpret its representations as glimpses of an objective world, the latter expression in turn being understood as referring to a world of 'weighty' objects which are independent of any particular state in which they are being represented and which are furthermore subject to various fairly stringent laws of connectedness.²⁵ In a number of passages Nietzsche wrestles with the very same question and an 'objective' reality 'external' to it—such a distinction between a subject and an 'objective' reality 'external' to it—such a reality being a necessary correlate of any potentially self-conscious subject, according to both Kant and Schopenhauer.²⁶ Nietzsche's contribution on this issue emphasizes a different aspect of the 'independence' that is definitive of the objectively real in so far as the latter is involved in the constitution of a self-world divide.

What is necessary for us to be able to conceive of ourselves as subjects encountering a world of real, external objects? Nietzsche's answer is that the concept of objective reality involves the idea of an actual or possible *efficacy* associated with some representational contents ('appearances', in his terminology; WP 588). This idea of the causal efficacy of objects is obtained from the *resistance* posed by appearances to the subject's experience of its spontaneous, self-moving *agency*. If this thought is conjoined with the more familiar Kantian and Schopenhauerian claim about the necessary dependence of empirical self-consciousness—and thus of subjectivity in one central sense of this expression—on representations as of 'external', 'independent' objects, it entails Nietzsche's conclusion in GM III. 12 that the concept of a will-less subject representing determinate objects is incoherent. But in fact we do not need to rely on Kant and Schopenhauer to supply one of the premisses for this conclusion, for it follows from some of Nietzsche's own considerations. In his remarks on the concept of the subject, one theme that remains constant is the emphasis on its dependence on the idea of causal power:

The degree to which we feel life and power . . . gives us our measure of 'being', 'reality', not-appearance. The subject: this is the term for our belief in a unity underlying all the different impulses of the highest feeling of reality. (WP 485)

The concept 'reality', 'being' is taken from our feeling of the 'subject' . . . as the cause of all actions, as an agent. (WP 488)²⁷

²⁵ See P. F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense* (London: Methuen, 1975), esp. 97–112, for a classical statement of this reading of Kant.

²⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 274–8; Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation*, trans. E. F. J. Payne, 2 vols. (New York: Dover, 1969), First Book, §7 (esp. i. 32–4).

²⁷ We need not occupy ourselves here with what is Nietzsche's main target of criticism in these remarks: the tendency to think of the subject as a substance from which causal powers emanate.

Elsewhere he insists that the experience of the subject's power essentially requires 'resistances' (e.g. WP 689, 693, 702). Combining these by no means marginal but frequently repeated observations yields the conclusion that subjectivity requires independent—in the sense of resistant—objects. Nietzsche's point, then, can be taken to be about the interdependence of the notion of a real object and of self-consciousness. Both of these emerge together, presupposing the phenomenon of resistance to what is experienced as spontaneous agency. Most of his remarks in this context concentrate on what is to him the crucial element in the object's independence: its resistance to the subject's 'will' or experienced agency. This is in sharp contrast to the Kantian emphasis on the rule-governed *order* in the contents of experience as what is constitutively required for the distinction between a sphere of independent objects and a subjective order of experientially encountering these objects. According to Nietzsche, what makes the object 'independent' is its experienced (or experientiable) efficacy, and this in turn requires an agency or active 'performance' on the part of the subject: 'Thus it is the highest degrees of performance that awaken belief in the . . . reality of the object' (WP 533). 'So, being is grasped by us as that which acts on us, which proves itself through its efficacy' (KGW VIII. 1. 5. 19).

What is the kind of 'performance' which Nietzsche might be thinking of here? Is he referring to *bodily* agency and to experiences of resistance involving tactile pressure, as Dilthey's theory does in much more detail a few years later?²⁸ This is clearly not Nietzsche's point: 'A thing = its properties: and these are equivalent to what concerns us about this thing: a unity under which we gather the relations relevant to us . . . an object is the sum of experienced obstructions' (KGW VIII. 1. 2. 77). Evidently Nietzsche is speaking here of our ordinary everyday conception of a real object which is, according to him, presupposed by higher-level theories about the physical world (see below). And it is quite clear that the 'obstructions' which might be relevant in this connection are not seen by him as dependent on *any one* sense modality. This is fortunate, for such a restriction would undermine the generality of his claim, which is a conceptual one. What is essential to

²⁸ Wilhelm Dilthey, 'Beiträge zur Lösung der Frage vom Ursprung unseres Glaubens an die Realität der Aussenwelt', in *Gesammelte Schriften*, vol. v (Leipzig: Teubner, 1923). Dilthey's thesis is that 'consciousness of willed movement and of the resistance which it meets . . . simultaneously engender consciousness of the self and of real objects' (p. 98). He is careful to distinguish the experience of resistance from sensations of tactile pressure, but nevertheless holds that occurrence of the latter is a necessary condition for the former to be possible. He is criticized on this score by Max Scheler, whose related theory is in this respect closer to Nietzsche's idea. Cf. Max Scheler, *Erkenntnis und Arbeit* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1977), 239. For a recent continuation of this debate, see Thomas Baldwin, 'Objectivity, Causality and Agency', and James Russell, 'At Two with Nature: Agency and the Development of the Self-World Dualism', both in J. L. Bermúdez, A. Marcel, and N. Eilan (eds.), *The Body and the Self* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1995).

Nietzsche's position is thus a highly general point: that it be possible for the subject to distinguish between event sequences that are dependent on what the subject experiences as its agency and others that are not so, and such a distinction would seem to be in principle possible even for a being that lived in (say) a purely visual world. What is minimally and uncontroversially required for an awareness of agency is the experience of certain representational contents ('appearances') changing in accordance with what might be called the subject's 'unconditional' desires with present-tense contents, i.e. desires concerning the present which are not checked by countervailing ones or by other considerations. It is very unclear as well as controversial what, if anything, is necessary beyond this. Indeed, it is far from obvious whether the subject, in acting, necessarily has to be presented to itself as embodied in order to have an experience of agency.²⁹

Nietzsche's present point, then, may be summarized as follows. The distinction between a self and real objects external to it is only possible for a point of view or perspective which involves desires and 'concerns' (and thus volitions), and which furthermore experiences itself both as a spontaneous agent and as obstructed or resisted in its agency by items in its experience. The concept of the objectively real is constitutively linked to this experience of the efficacy of some 'appearances' which manifests itself in their resistance to the sort of desires which, when they are effective, we call volitions (or intentions-in-action).³⁰ Grasping the significance of this thesis is complicated by the fact that Nietzsche has already argued (see (1) above) that the very *individuation* of objects presupposes interests and active interpretation. That this is a separate point can be seen very clearly by considering cases of vivid imagining where we certainly individuate objects without, however, regarding them as real. To be thematically (attentively) aware of a particular, even a particular with spatial properties, is to be distinguished from being aware of something as a real, 'external' object. It therefore seems that a distinction is needed, in order to explain this contrast, between the minimal

²⁹ When I am thinking through a philosophical problem, or trying to visualize some historical scene, I have an experience of agency or activity. I may perhaps as a matter of fact also have a simultaneous background awareness of my body, but there is no essential connection between these experiences. It seems perfectly possible for a subject to have an experience of the first kind without simultaneously having one of the second. Husserl claims that having representations as of enduring, three-dimensional objects necessitates the subject's self-presentation as self-moving 'lived body', involving, among other things, kinaesthetic sensations (*Ideen zu einer reinen Phänomenologie und phänomenologischen Philosophie* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1952), Second Book, e.g. 55–8). But it would be very implausible to maintain that *any* representation as of a particular, extended item would be a priori impossible from a merely geometric point of view.

³⁰ Nietzsche's account requires that we can make sense of the idea of volitions in relation to objects or event sequences where willing is generally ineffective (e.g. 'willing that it should rain'). The intelligibility of such talk is defended and explicated by T. L. S. Sprigge, *Facets, Words and Beliefs* (London: Routledge, 1970), 288–97.

activity involved even in attentional selection, that is, in the individuation of objects, and further, affectively less neutral, relations to 'the will' required at some stage for what is thus individuated to be conceptualizable as a real object.³¹ For this to be possible some attentionally selected objects must have engaged a more substantial affective or appetitive response of some kind, for instance a desire that the object appearance be maintained, or an experience of it as unpleasant or painful and a desire that it should cease. This does not mean that everything regarded as a real object must have engaged the will in some such way, since many such objects acquire this status by virtue of associative or other lawlike links with others which have.³² There is another important asymmetry between the ways 'the will' is involved in object individuation and the self-world distinction respectively. It is possible to individuate experiential items by merely being directed onto them in selective attention and without being able to *think* of oneself as an agent (presumably animals and infants do this). But the mere *experience* of agency and resistance are not sufficient for distinguishing between the self and objective reality. This requires the ability to think of oneself as an agent (see below).

To elucidate Nietzsche's point further and also to simplify matters, we may ignore for a moment his observation that any individuation of object-like particulars already involves interest and activity and suppose, like classical empiricism, that the perception of such items could conceivably be a purely passive affair of registering pre-structured data. We may even suppose these data to display a high degree of rule-governedness, connectedness, and qualitative continuity, so as to be intrinsically hospitable to an interpretation of them as appearances of 'weighty', enduring objects. Even if we assume, then, that a subject might find itself in this way entirely passively enjoying experiences as of spatial particulars, this would not yet allow for a distinction between a self and real objects. With however much orderliness numerically distinct items might succeed one another 'according to a rule', thus encouraging in principle a reidentification of enduring objects, every datum would be just that—one more image, perceived, indeed, as from some point of view, but this point of view would be one without a possible interiority. It could not be the perspective of a *subject* on a *world*.³³

³¹ This important distinction is absent in James Russell's paper, whose argument otherwise is in close agreement with the points made here. (See 'At Two with Nature: Agency and the Development of the Self-World Dualism', 134–5)

³² Cf. Dilthey, 'Beiträge', 114–17.

³³ Therefore not every conceivable point of view is *ipso facto* a 'subjective' one. For a point of view on the world to belong to a subject (a self), affectivity and appetition need to be involved in the fairly substantial way described above. Nietzsche's use of 'perspective' always assumes the presence of these elements. Hence Volker Gerhardt is correct to observe that Nietzschean perspectives 'require subjects who relate to something other than themselves' ('Die Perspektive des Perspektivismus', *Nietzsche-Studien*, 18 (1989), 268).

I should like to finish the discussion of this aspect of Nietzsche's thinking with two cautionary remarks. First, nothing in what has been said so far implies that the concept of objective reality cannot detach itself at least to a considerable extent from the kind of resistances a subject originally or normally encounters. For example, in the inventory of items making up objective reality with which physical science operates, colour properties as they are experienced do not figure, although we very often find ourselves apparently affected by such sense-individuated properties in our ordinary *Lebenswelt*. We shall discuss Nietzsche's view on just how far the concept of objective reality can abstract from the life-world in (3) below. Secondly, Nietzsche is drawing attention only to what is, according to him, a necessary, not a sufficient, condition of a self-world distinction. As I have already indicated, it is clear that such a distinction requires conceptual abilities going well beyond the mere experience of agency and resistance. In order to distinguish my 'self' from external objects affecting me, I need to be able to *think* of myself as an agent rather than just be aware of my agency. What the further conditions of such a self-conception, or of any substantial self-consciousness, might be is a question on which much philosophical effort has been expended in recent decades. Among the claims that have been made in this regard are that self-consciousness non-contingently requires the belief that there are objects which continue to exist when unperceived, or that it requires the subject to think of itself as a physical object. It has also been widely held that self-consciousness requires intersubjectivity, either in the rather uncontroversial sense that the possession of the psychological concepts needed for self-consciousness involves the in-principle ability to apply them to others; or as the more substantial claim that for a subject to be self-conscious it is necessary that it has experiences and thoughts as of actual others; or indeed as the highly ambitious thesis that self-consciousness implies the actual existence of other subjects. Irrespective of the merits of the arguments mustered in this context as attempting to establish entirely general truths about the necessary conditions of self-consciousness *überhaupt*, nothing of what I have attributed to Nietzsche in this respect is incompatible with these further claims.³⁴ However, it is incompatible with a

³⁴ A note of caution may, however, not be inappropriate in relation to such claims. There is sometimes a tendency in discussions of these issues to think of self-consciousness involving a self-other distinction as an all-or-nothing affair and, in particular, to assume that such substantial self-consciousness requires the ability to determine one's existence in (objective) time, in Kant's famous phrase from the 'Refutation of Idealism'. A less schematic view of substantial self-consciousness has good reason to recognize that it is a matter of degree and to take cognizance of the empirical evidence suggesting that there are rudimentary forms of it that do not involve the capacity for autobiographical (narrative) reflection. See e.g. D. N. Stern, 'The Early Development of Schemas of Self, Other, and "Self with Other"', in J. D. Lichtenberg and S. Kaplan (eds),

strictly Kantian account of (phenomenal) objectivity. It might be objected here that Kant is making precisely Nietzsche's point when he maintains that any representation of an object—in the minimal sense of an instantiation of a general concept—involves the spontaneity of the understanding. Kant in fact says explicitly that every act of *attention* involves the spontaneity, i.e. activity, of the understanding.³⁵ This can indeed be read as corresponding to Nietzsche's observation reported in (1) above. But unlike Nietzsche, Kant does not give a special role to the will in relation to the constitution of empirically real outer objects. What is essentially involved in the constitution of such objects is for him not the resistance of some representational contents to what the subject experiences as its spontaneous agency, but rather the thoroughgoing rule-governedness among spatial representational contents. A spatial 'appearance' that cannot be integrated into such an order is, by virtue of this fact alone, not an appearing of a real object but an illusion. In fact, Kant insists (following Hume on this point) that we have no intuition of efficacy at all with respect to objects of outer sense.³⁶ Nietzsche would respond that if this were the case, neither a representation of external empirical reality nor self-consciousness would be possible.

3. Nietzsche's *prima facie* most radical thought in connection with his use of 'perspective' to indicate the dependence of representations on affectivity or appetition is the idea that what can count as objectively real for us is necessarily related to our dominant interests and concerns:

But we have only drawn the concept 'real, truly existing' from that which 'concerns us'; the more we are affected in our interest, the more we believe in the reality of a thing or an entity. 'It exists' means: I experience myself as existing in relation to it. . . . So 'being' is grasped by us as that which acts on us, which *proves itself through its efficacy*. (KGW VIII. 1. 5. 19; cf. WP 533, 588) #

. . . something that of is no concern to anyone is not at all. (WP 555)

The most natural interpretation of these and similar passages is that

(EID) our concept of objective reality constrains the range of possible candidates for this status to items that are relevantly related to our actual dominant concerns.

For convenience, we may call this Nietzsche's thesis of *essential interest-dependence* (EID). It is a fundamental theme of virtually all of Nietzsche's writings, even in the early period up to 1876, that the interests and 'values'

Reflections on Self-Psychology (Hillsdale, NJ: Analytical Press, 1983). Also A. Melzoff, 'Foundations for Developing a Concept of Self', in D. Cicchetti and M. Beeghly, *The Self in Transition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

³⁵ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, B 157.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, A 49/B 66.

actually governing normal humans, consciously or otherwise, tend not to be cognitive or even purely contemplative ones, but rather practical ones, often—albeit by no means invariably or exclusively—involving desires for the subject's own survival and affective well-being (see e.g. HH 34; BGE 6; WP 480, 677).³⁷

Now among the sorts of particular items which are of most forceful concern to normal humans as they actually are are arguably those that they are liable to encounter as *solid*—as exerting tactile pressure. If, for instance, the deliverances of a person's various sensory modalities, which normally tend to function in well-adapted synchronicity, suddenly began systematically to conflict with each other, so that the contours of apparent objects as presented to his sight suddenly no longer corresponded to their shapes as revealed by his sense of touch, it is to be expected that he would soon begin to rely on his tactile experiences as revealing 'what's really out there' and to regard his visual experiences as illusory. Assuming that there were no systematic correlations exploitable as signs between the deliverances of sight and touch respectively, he would begin to think of himself as having to find his way around the world rather like a blind person does. If this happened to humans collectively, we would regard ourselves as having visually lost contact with the actual world, even if it turned out that our visual experiences displayed highly coherent patterns both internally and in relation to other people's visual experiences. Presumably we would then consider ourselves to be suffering collectively from highly coherent visual hallucinations.³⁸ It is plausible to think that this tendency to associate what can be encountered as tactile resistance with what is real has its origin in the fact that many of our fundamental practical interests are so strongly linked to this sense modality. In no other respect do we normally experience ourselves as so exposed to, and potentially vulnerable by, the world.

Nietzsche is not committed, however, to a quasi-phenomenalist view according to which what is objectively real is what is an actual or possible datum of the sense of touch. On the present reading he is rather suggesting that what is objectively real cannot be *completely* detached from what we actually encounter in experience as most strongly affecting our interests

³⁷ In Nietzsche's later motivational psychology such desires are interpreted as ultimately either constituted by or derivative of a more fundamental generic desire for the experience of power or growth (*Machtgefühl*). (See e.g. BGE 230; WP 688–9; KGW VII. 3. 40. 61).

³⁸ One can easily make this story more complex and less clear-cut. What if the visual appearances were associated with auditory, especially linguistic, signals, and people could interpret themselves as interacting with other, visually presented, subjects? What if this apparent interaction took the form of an exchange about the nature of their common situation? It is not clear that such hypothetical subjects, as long as they retained normal human interests, could still regard themselves as living in a unified world at all.

(whatever that may be). If what has been said in the preceding paragraph about the hierarchy, in this respect, of sensory modalities is correct, we can conclude that what is objectively real for us, on a Nietzschean view, must be *relevantly related* to the contents of certain *sorts* of sense experiences of ours. One central kind of relevance here pertains to the kind of items which figure in our attempts to explain, by means of covering laws with predictive power, the occurrence of such experiential contents. It is because we have a vital interest in the prediction of such experiences that laws which have predictive power concerning them count as being 'explanatory' in a significant way. The best explanations of this kind may contain substantial terms most plausibly construed as referring to 'theoretical' entities which cannot themselves be encountered in the sort of sense experiences they help to explain (for example, electrons or electromagnetic fields). This does not, on Nietzsche's analysis, disqualify them from being regarded as objectively real. But given his empiricist conception of thought (see Section 2 above), such putative items can only intelligibly be interpreted along realist lines if they are in principle perceivable by subjects appropriately located and endowed with suitable faculties of perception and thought. Furthermore, the status as real accorded to them is parasitic on their role in the prediction of experiences whose contents are of significant concern to us. It is thus, according to Nietzsche, not merely the fact that items figure in causal (nomological) explanations which qualifies them for the label 'real'. Modifying our earlier story of a de-synchronized experience a little, it seems quite conceivable that the course of our experience was such as to warrant the postulation of distinct, mutually irreducible causal orders. Nietzsche's point is that in such a case only those explanatory items would count as real which had a causal role in relation to experiential contents that would *actually matter* to us. It is in this sense that objective reality is relative to human interests.

Now it is evident that what motivates this Nietzschean view is a more general construal of 'objective reality' as expressing an implicitly relational concept, in the sense of its being essentially indexed to subject-implicating perspectives. Rather like a pure perspectival representation such as 'x is on the right' is implicitly relational and should be more perspicuously indexed to a representing subject—i.e. 'x is on the right of S (relative to S's axis of vision)'—so 'x is objectively real' should be explicated as 'x is objectively real for S-type subjects, given their interests'. What Nietzsche says about the concept of objective reality in relation to *human* subjects is thus a special case of his more general relational elucidation of this concept. It follows that the truth about objective reality would be different for subjects with different fundamental interests: 'There are many kinds of eyes. Even the

sphinx has eyes—and consequently there are many kinds of "truths,"' (WP 540).³⁹

Perspectivism on the reading proposed here rules out global scepticism, at least if one grants that we cannot be radically mistaken about *all* our own central concerns. Assuming, for instance, that certain sense-based contents are the representational contents which in fact concern us most strongly, it is impossible according to EID that we should be comprehensively mistaken about the veridicality of our experiences presenting contents of this type. But it is certainly conceivable, as far as perspectivism is concerned, that those among our current explanatory theories which go significantly beyond the theoretical components involved in perception itself—in particular, our scientific and metaphysical theories—are comprehensively mistaken.

Nietzsche's rejection as incoherent of the idea of absolute objects (ERD) implies that all actual objects necessarily have features that mark them as represented. The considerations concerning interest-dependence which I am presently discussing have here been interpreted as presupposing the truth of ERD and can be seen as specifying further constraints on what can intelligibly count as such an object. Indeed, only if all possible particulars are perspectival in the sense specified by ERD does there appear to be any plausibility in the claim that all particulars that can count as real for us are necessarily relevantly related to our actual ruling interests. For if ERD is true, the only remaining rival candidates for the status of objective reality are object-like items figuring in other perspectives with quite different ruling interests (e.g. contemplative ones of a kind appearing strange to us). But if ERD is false and absolute objects are possible, it is unclear what good reason could be given for stipulating that their properties a priori could not be inaccessible to the methods of inquiry co-constituted by our quite contingent concerns. In Section 4 this issue will be pursued further and an alternative interpretation of Nietzsche's ideas on the interest-dependence of objective reality will be sketched which does not require concurrence with his denial of the possibility of absolute objects. Before that, however, the question needs to be addressed whether Nietzsche's position as outlined so far amounts to a version of ontological phenomenalism or idealism.

With regard to phenomenalism the answer is straightforward. None of the ideas attributed to Nietzsche above commit him to the view that there is nothing more to objects like trees or mountains than actual or possible experiential contents of subjects of a certain sort. Among the various problems associated with ontological phenomenalism, the most fundamental is

³⁹ The fragment continues: 'and consequently there is no truth'. Here as in other passages Nietzsche uses 'truth' in several distinct senses, thus creating the rhetorical effect of paradox. But his actual point is clear: there are many relative truths, but there cannot be any absolute truths.

probably that it can give us no explanation, in principle, of why the subjunctive conditionals which by its lights give most of the content of beliefs about material objects are true. Nothing in Nietzsche's view as presented so far requires him to accept such a strongly counter-intuitive position, which is in this respect comparable to the (allegedly) Humean idea of causality as simply consisting in contiguity and regular concomitance or succession. For Nietzsche there may certainly be something categorical about the world which is the truth-maker of a subjunctive like 'If I were to look in *that* direction now, I would have an experience as of the sun setting'. But whatever arrangement of categorical features of the world may make such sentences true if they are true, it cannot include absolute, non-perspectival objects.

With respect to idealism, it is doubtful whether this label is helpful when characterizing Nietzsche's view—unless indeed one uses it as a blanket term to cover any position that rejects what I have called strong realism. Historically, 'idealism' has generally been used in a more discriminating way for metaphysical doctrines which accord ontological priority to the subject or to 'spirit', either in the sense of considering it as capable in principle of existing independently of objects, while objects are dependent on it, or in the sense of considering objects as in some sense 'produced' by, or 'emanating' from, the subject or from 'spirit' or 'thought'. The former description would apply to Berkeley, the latter, presumably, to figures like Fichte and Hegel.⁴⁰ Nietzsche suggests nothing of this sort. As I have interpreted him, neither subjects nor objects should be thought of as substances capable of absolute, independent existence. Subjects, furthermore, do not 'produce' objects but find themselves passive in relation to their recalcitrant presence in sense-based experience.⁴¹ Nor does Nietzsche subscribe to the proto-idealist 'veil of ideas' doctrine according to which what is immediately perceived is 'in' the mind. While Kant had already argued (contra Berkeley) that our observational access to outer, three-dimensional objects is just as non-inferential and direct as to our mental states revealed by inner sense,⁴² Nietzsche often suggests the more radical view that bodily phenomena are more directly accessible to observation than 'inner' states (e.g. WP 489, 659).

⁴⁰ With respect to Kant's transcendental idealism the issue is complicated by Kant's multi-level account of the subject. But it is clear that he considers spatio-temporal objects to be dependent on 'us' while the noumenal self, 'the being which thinks in us' (A 401), or, in another phrase, 'the determining in me' (B 158), which I have no intuition and thus no knowledge of, is equally clearly not regarded by Kant as dependent on such objects, but is thought as substance (A 450/B 478) in the sense of having independent existence.

⁴¹ For not dissimilar observations on the issues broached in this and the previous sentence, cf. John McDowell, *Mind and World* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1994), esp. 10 and 25.

⁴² Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 367–75.

4. THE LIFE-WORLD AND OTHER WORLDS: PERSPECTIVISM AS A NEW AGENDA FOR PHILOSOPHY

It was suggested above that Nietzsche's analysis of the notion of objective reality as explicated in Section 3 (EID) derives whatever plausibility it may have from tacitly taking for granted ERD, i.e. the conclusion of his argument (discussed in Section 2) attempting to establish the impossibility of non-perspectival objects. Once absolute objects are thus excluded from the picture, it may perhaps seem acceptable to argue that real objects relative to some type of subject S are, or are constructed from, certain actual or possible 'appearances' standing in appropriate relations to the interests of S-type subjects. But what if one does not accept ERD? In this concluding section I shall propose an alternative or, better, a supplementary interpretation of Nietzsche's argument which liberates it from the need to accept this premiss. While the conjunction of ERD and EID clearly amounts to a version of *metaphysical anti-realism*,⁴³ I shall refer to this reading, which has similarities with certain aspects of both pragmatism and phenomenology, as *metaphysical indifferentism*. This is a stance which is compatible with the truth of metaphysical anti-realism and hence may supplement it, but it is equally consistent with a strong realism about (some) spatio-temporal objects. The core of the anti-realist reading of perspectivism developed so far might be paraphrased, roughly, as 'absolute objects are impossible'; the metaphysically indifferent interpretation as 'if absolute objects are possible, they are not worth caring about'.

To appreciate the attraction of such indifferentism, consider, first, what EID without the support of ERD commits its adherents to. According to it, our concept of objective reality imposes the constraint that anything that can count as objectively real for us should be relevantly related to those representational contents which most strongly affect us, given our actual dominant interests. The meaning of 'relevantly' is in turn determined by those very interests. Given the kinds of concerns we actually find ourselves with, those aspects of causal relations relevant for prediction play a very prominent role here, but Nietzsche's remarks imply that this prominence is not one required by the very concept of the objectively real. EID entails that even if there were (in some sense) instances of absolute objects, these could not have the status of *reality* for some class of subjects unless subjects of this type experienced themselves as appropriately affected in their interests by

⁴³ Metaphysical anti-realism is the denial of what I have called strong realism. It is of course compatible with what is sometimes referred to as minimal realism, i.e. the view that a true episodic belief is true in virtue of something other than itself.

them. Unless they were thus affected, those objects could presumably for them constitute only something like the 'shadow kingdom . . . beside true existence', a belief in which Nietzsche attributes to the ancient Greeks (WP 586).

To make Nietzsche's point here more vivid and to highlight its problems, imagine a subject whose notional world is entirely detached from *our* world which we shall assume, for the purposes of the argument, to be a world containing non-perspectival particulars. Let us call this imaginary monadic subject *Leibniz*. *Leibniz* may have a spatial position, but he is from our point of view disembodied, although not from his own. Indeed, one may assume his monadic notional world to contain everything regarded as necessary for self-conscious experience and thought by one's preferred transcendental arguments. There are in it items which he can interpret as appearances of persisting things comporting themselves in accordance with invariable laws, there are also items which he can interpret as other subjects linguistically interacting with him, and so forth. All that matters for the purposes of the present argument is that *Leibniz* is not affected by the absolute particulars with which we, *ex hypothesi*, interact. In fact, to make sense of Nietzsche's point even a weaker assumption would be sufficient, namely that *Leibniz* is not affected by the non-perspectival particulars in our world in any way that importantly *matters* to him. But let us continue with the more clear-cut, stronger version of the story. It might be objected that the hypothesis is incoherent since the existence of *Leibniz* would be unverifiable. This worry should not detain us for long. First, while it is true that it is part of the point of the hypothesis that there should be no interaction between *Leibniz* and absolute, e.g. physical, particulars populating our world, hence no physical possibility of a verification of his existence by techniques involving such items, there might in principle be other means of empirically confirming his existence or indeed of demonstrating it a priori. (The historical Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz after all thought that the existence of other monads could be proved a priori.) But, more importantly, an *ad hominem* response may suffice here. Since Nietzsche's point is directed primarily against an absolute (strong realist) conception of objective reality and proponents of such a conception are committed to a non-epistemic construal of real objects, an objection to the hypothesis on verificationist grounds from this quarter is hardly to be expected and thus need not be countered in this context.

With *Leibniz* thus installed securely for present purposes, we may rephrase Nietzsche's point as follows. As far as our concept of objective reality is concerned, *Leibniz*, in being ignorant about the absolute particulars in our world, is not ignorant about any truths concerning objective reality, since these items are utterly irrelevant to him. Once the issue between Nietzschean

perspectivism as expressed in EID and strong realism is sharpened in this way, we may not feel confident of just what 'our' concept of the objectively real would commit us to in such a case; i.e. how we would be disposed to use the phrase 'objective reality' in relation to this hypothetical situation. Most probably we would, contra Nietzsche, be inclined to say that *Leibniz* is indeed ignorant of some parts or aspects of reality. This indicates that we have or are capable of having what might be called *pure* cognitive interests which are not subservient to other (e.g. practical, manipulative-technological, aesthetic, communicative) concerns. On the other hand, most people would on reflection almost certainly also find it bizarre to label the phenomena showing up in *Leibniz*'s experiential world 'mere' phenomena or 'merely subjective' or even 'illusory'.⁴⁴ The bizarreness of this would be even more pronounced if it turned out that *Leibniz* had no pure cognitive interests and thus, in being ignorant of non-perspectival particulars, lacked nothing whatever that mattered to him. Nietzsche thus seems correct when he claims that our concept of objective reality, as normally used, applies paradigmatically to aspects of our 'phenomenal', experiential world which are experienced as affecting us, or regarded as capable of affecting us, in certain important ways. If we suppose ourselves for a moment to be in the position of *Leibniz*, can we really on reflection make sense of the idea that we would, in that case, be entirely cut off from reality, at least as we (now) standardly understand that expression? The conflicting intuitions elicited by the considerations just adduced suggest that we do not use a phrase like 'objective reality' univocally; in different contexts of use it expresses different concepts whose extensions may conceivably diverge as in our illustration.

Arguably, therefore, the most fruitful way of reading Nietzsche's remarks on this issue—and one he himself often explicitly invites—is ultimately not as making a point about how a certain term or phrase is standardly used. Such claims tend to be of very limited force against proposed conceptual revisions unless a good argument can be given for resisting such revisions. Rather, he is above all concerned to draw the reader's attention to the arcaneness, the other-worldliness, of a conception of objective reality and of an associated pure cognitive interest which permit a detachment of reality from the experiential contents which otherwise matter to us. Even if there could be non-perspectival objects—i.e. ignoring the argument of Section 2—the question which is most important from Nietzsche's point of view

⁴⁴ Kant would agree, provided these phenomena were sufficiently law-governed: 'If, now, I . . . say that all things, as outer appearances, are side by side in space, the rule is valid universally and without limitation. Our exposition therefore [] establishes the *reality*, that is, the objective validity of space in respect of whatever can be presented to us outwardly as an object, but also at the same time the *ideality* of space in respect of things when they are considered in themselves through reason' (*Critique of Pure Reason*, A 28/B 44).

remains: why should we care about them? Why should it matter to us whether our familiar ('phenomenal') world, the world of possible appearances for us, is a potentially infinite set of appearances of absolute objects, or whether it consists instead of Berkeleyan ideas, or of Leibnizian monadic perceptions, or is an 'objectification' of a Schopenhauerian Will?

It is true, there could be a metaphysical world; the absolute possibility of this can hardly be opposed. . . . If the existence of such a world had been demonstrated as well as one likes, it would still be clear that knowledge of it would be the most useless of all knowledge: even more useless than a knowledge of the chemical analysis of water must be to a sailor in danger of shipwreck. (HH 9)

Even in the well-known passage from *Twilight of the Idols* sometimes used as evidence for Nietzsche's rejection of the notion of a thing in itself as self-contradictory, what he in fact explicitly says is *not* that it is incoherent, but that knowledge of what it purports to apply to would be *futile*: "The 'true world'—an idea which is no longer of any use, not even as an obligation—an idea which has become useless, obsolete, hence a refuted idea: let us get rid of it" (TI IV). What is it that makes (some) metaphysical knowledge 'useless', according to these passages? The expression 'metaphysical world' usually refers, in Nietzsche's relatively early writings from where the first quotation is taken, specifically to conceptions such as Schopenhauer's 'World-Will' whose character in itself is supposed to be not directly accessible to human cognition. What the Will is in itself cannot manifest itself as it is in itself in human experience. In this sense, the truth of the hypothesis that there is a cosmic Will can *make no difference* to possible human experience and knowledge of it is thus 'useless'.⁴⁵ The same would be true for absolute particulars. For these also could not manifest themselves as they are in themselves in human experience. Of course, if the assumption of absolute particulars was *constitutively* involved in our best common-sense and scientific theories, i.e. in explanations with predictive power, then such items would make a difference to possible human experience. But it is highly implausible to hold that successful scientific theories rationally require a strong realist interpretation.⁴⁶ According to Nietzsche's metaphysical indifference, whether we metaphysically 'explain' the predictive success of some of our empirical theories by postulating absolute objects, or by Berkeleyan ideas sustained by an all-perceiving God, is irrelevant from the point of view of any human

⁴⁵ It may be said that it only makes no difference if one is not motivated by pure cognitive interests. But if one is motivated by such interests and believes Schopenhauer's metaphysics, one may, for example, be depressed by it. But in this case it is the *belief* which makes the experiential (here: affective) difference, not its truth.

⁴⁶ For a detailed discussion of this issue, see my *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, 46–57 and 150–62.

interests *except* purely cognitive ones, and it is for this reason that knowledge of the 'true world' is useless.⁴⁷

Much of Nietzsche's later writing, perhaps most famously sections 23–8 of the third essay of *On the Genealogy of Morals*, is devoted to showing not the incoherence, but the poverty and undesirability, of a view of the world in which metaphysical questions and approaches that permit the categorization of the objects of our mundane interests—interests other than pure cognitive ones—as 'mere' appearances, as somehow systematically lacking in or distorting reality, are regarded as of central or even overriding importance. The attitude that accords them such importance he calls the 'will to truth' and identifies as the 'core' of the 'ascetic ideal', or of 'religion' in a wide sense (GM III. 27): 'Religion used to correspond to the *popular conception* of nature. Today the popular conception is materialism. Consequently what exists of religion today needs to speak to the people in a materialist language' (KGW VII. 1. 4. 221). There are strong indications in Nietzsche's writings that what ultimately motivates his attacks on the idea of non-perspectival real objects is the opposition of what he unashamedly calls his 'taste' to the futility and life-undermining other-worldliness of an attitude which grants great significance to such metaphysical questions or approaches: 'It is of cardinal importance that one should abolish the *true world*. It is the great inspirer of doubt and devaluator in respect of the world *we are*' (WP 583). Recognizing that it is this motivation which gives the characteristic urgency to Nietzsche's criticisms may also enable us to explain an initially puzzling feature of his statements on this issue. Occasionally his denial of a non-perspectival reality is tempered by much more tentative, indeed agnostic, remarks: 'How far the perspectival character of being reaches or even whether it also has some other character . . . cannot be established' (GS 374). This strongly suggests that what matters for Nietzsche in this debate is ultimately not whether absolute objects are *possible*, but whether we should be interested in them, even if they are. His occasional prevarications on the question of their possibility also seem to indicate a hesitation to make his critique depend entirely on a metaphysical argument of the very kind which, if the history of philosophy is to be taken as evidence, may have little hope of commanding general assent (not because it is an anti-realist argument, but because it is a metaphysical one). The most promising explanation of the historical fact of ongoing contestation in

⁴⁷ At least if one considers God in Berkeley's metaphysics only in his idea-producing and idea-sustaining role, excluding the possibility of any more direct divine self-revelations ('miracles'), and ignoring any moral and soteriological aspects of the belief in God. The latter aspects clearly *do* relate to human concerns other than purely cognitive ones. It would therefore be quite illegitimate to conclude from Nietzsche's argument that metaphysics *per se* cannot have any practical relevance.

metaphysics may well be, as Nietzsche openly recognizes by his very hesitation, that our 'intuitions' in these remote regions of intermittent human curiosity tend to be less than completely firm, let alone irresistible. In fact Nietzsche himself in some moods is drawn to a metaphysical narrative incompatible with perspectivism as explicated earlier. Sometimes he surmises that '(objective) reality in itself' is not an unintelligible expression but that it refers to an ontologically independent reality beyond all possible specific conceptualizations—a realm of flux or radical 'becoming', of virtually instantaneous qualitative change without recognizable patterns or regularities. Our categories of the understanding, which have developed under evolutionary constraints, impose a certain relatively stable form on this chaos and thereby make it conceptually knowable (e.g. WP 515–17, 520; TI III. 5). I shall not enter into a discussion of the very considerable philosophical difficulties associated with this variant of a naturalized and radicalized Kantianism.⁴⁸ What is of interest here, and more importantly what is likely to have interested Nietzsche about it, is that its implications, as far as knowledge is concerned, do not differ significantly from those of Nietzsche's dominant perspectivism as outlined in Sections 2 and 3. For it also makes it impossible to know objects 'as they are in themselves' and confines all possible human knowledge, at least if it is to have any specificity at all, to the world as it shows up for us. This 'world we are' (WP 583), for which Nietzsche often simply uses the term 'life', is the world as we encounter it in everyday experience and, in addition rather than to the exclusion of it, in more specialized pursuits parasitic on it (such as natural science). It is a world which includes appearances as of relatively persisting objects and of other subjects besides us, a world of 'appearance, change, becoming, death, want, desire' (GM III. 28).

But, it may be asked, what could be 'life-denying' about trying to *explain* metaphysically why the contents of experience are the way they are, and why certain subjunctive conditionals about our perceptual beliefs are true?⁴⁹ Nietzsche would presumably concede that there is nothing intrinsically objectionable about such an epistemic interest. But he would add a number

⁴⁸ Briefly: there is the epistemological question how Nietzsche knows of this intrinsically unconceptualizable reality in itself (unconceptualizable except in the most general and relatively empty terms as 'becoming', etc.). More importantly, the putative idea of an objective reality which cannot be known *in principle* (WP 517, 520) would seem to fall victim to the many familiar objections, some of them discussed in this paper, against the very intelligibility of such a notion. Finally, this idea seems to be a version of the time-honoured distinction between 'prime matter' or 'stuff' and 'form', or between 'content' and 'scheme', a distinction about which there are good reasons to be suspicious. For one well-known criticism, see Donald Davidson, 'On the Very Idea of a Conceptual Scheme', in his *Inquiries into Truth and Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

⁴⁹ We have seen that for Nietzsche such beliefs are recognizable as such, although of course not infallibly, by their intrinsic character, involving the experience of resistance (see Sect. 3).

of important caveats. First, the kind of 'explanation' in question should not be mistakenly assimilated to explanations in everyday and in scientific contexts. In the latter we have fairly clear and broadly agreed criteria for what makes explanation A 'better' than explanation B (in science, explanatory virtue is very closely linked to predictive success). In metaphysics we have no such criteria. Assuming for the moment that there are sophisticated versions of physicalist realism, idealism, panpsychism, or theist creationism which are internally coherent, there simply is no procedure agreed among competent inquirers for determining what would make any one of these metaphysical 'explanations' better than another. None of them essentially make any predictions at all, and all of them are in principle compatible with the results of scientific research.

Secondly, Nietzsche would resist a framework of research which made 'explanations' of this kind their *primary* concern, rather than a subsidiary aspect of investigating the 'life'-world. A philosophy which conceived of itself as first and foremost metaphysics would be subject to Nietzsche's criticism of the 'ascetic ideal', provided, that is, it regarded itself as an important pursuit.

Thirdly and crucially, Nietzsche's most persistent and uncompromising attacks are directed against metaphysical 'explanations' which, rather than saving the appearances they are supposedly explaining, wish to demote them to 'mere' appearances or to 'illusions'. He argues that reflection on our use of the term 'reality' reveals that we tend to use it—at least primarily or normally—for those (re)presentational contents which affect us most strongly and as they affect us. Various metaphysical doctrines, from Platonism to many versions of materialism, propose conceptual revisions entailing that those objects of concern are 'illusory' or 'merely apparent'. Indeed, on some of these doctrines, concerns and interests themselves, as they normally manifest themselves to us (i.e. as affective aspects of experiential episodes), also involve false interpretations of the real. Nietzsche strongly urges resistance against such rationally far from mandatory conceptual revisions. On his psychological analysis of the will to truth and its connection with the ascetic ideal, their motivations are best explained as ultimately originating in, at best, an indifference to 'life' or, less harmlessly, in *ressentiment* against it.⁵⁰ We are least likely to lapse into such indifference or *ressentiment* if we concentrate in our cognitive pursuits on an elucidation of the structures of the life-world—scientific explanation being conceived not as conflicting with, but as one part of, this endeavour. It is this advice of Nietzsche's which became his most important and most influential legacy to subsequent continental European philosophy.

⁵⁰ For elaboration, see my *Nietzsche and Metaphysics*, 111–36.