

Introduction (1)

Nietzsche is often regarded as one of the most influential, but also one of the most misinterpreted thinkers of the 19th century. The sheer span of his influence goes to show exactly how his thought has often been used as a means of achieving, as the famous example goes, political precedence: when a philosopher succeeds in being widely read, this property may turn out to be a double-edged sword. When, to this historical fact, we add the possibility of crediting Nietzsche as one of the most cryptic philosophers to have ever lived, we arrive at an almost visible threat of carnage. It is our contention to show that precisely such carnage ensues if we hastily interpret, that is, misinterpret Nietzsche's constant warnings against dogmatically favoring 'Truth' without previously questioning the implications of its incorporation in our philosophical and even scientific inquiries. Against such misinterpretations—which in some cases claim that Nietzsche acts as the gravedigger of the concept of truth or the advocate of a dangerous relativism—we want to claim that Nietzsche's thesis is much stronger and that it has more worthwhile implications than merely destroying the current epistemic edifice. In order to avoid the dissolution which Nietzsche considers in the titular quote to be a very real possibility following a destruction with no subsequent affirmation, we contend to show, by following Gilles Deleuze's reading of Nietzsche, that new categories imposed by the *will to power*—namely, the high and the low, as opposed to the correct/wrong or true/untrue—offer a much stronger affirmation of life than that offered by a facile interpretation which merely favors non-truth over truth.

By following the current of Nietzsche's quote we seek to probe into the peculiarity of his position through explicating each of the stages of the quote itself: first, we will give room to the ancient Greek view of the philosopher as a lover of wisdom in order to see how it extends itself all the way to Kant; secondly, we will try to show what Nietzsche's concerns are regarding this conception which went virtually unchallenged up to him; and finally, we will show how the will to power as a dynamic intensity has its primary expression in human *conceptual thinking* and how this thinking refuses to conform to the dichotomy between truth and untruth (i.e. the antagonism Nietzsche himself highlights in the quote).

Philosopher—The lover of wisdom (2)

The concept of truth itself is problematic—today more than ever—primarily because we can rarely know what *kind* of truth a person is talking about when he refers to it. Instead of distinguishing between different theories of truth which may be mentioned in such discussions—for instance, the theory of correspondence, the semantic theory, that of coherence, etc.—we claim that Nietzsche is concerned with attacking a more fundamental view of truth: the *metaphysical* kind. When truth is understood as a metaphysical *value* we begin making much stronger claims than any particular theory of truth would ever dare to make: truth becomes transcendent, universal, invariant and static. It is precisely in this sense that we can talk of a truth which is opposed to mere appearances, which gives us a better grip on the essence of reality

itself; as such, truth lies beyond the world which is ascertainable by corporeal beings and demands an elevated approach to it. Aristotle and Plato both make similar claims regarding the accomplishment of a human being: rather than it being found inside of the world itself, true unity is only found by grasping the world from the outside, by abstractly *contemplating* the world's order by means of an *elevated notion of truth* which is connected to thinking by an unbreakable umbilical cord. The philosopher who seeks wisdom in such a way—that is, by trying to raise himself from his corporeal status into an above-worldly condition—is a philosopher of the *Heights*, as Deleuze would have put it. When put this way, it is not hard to understand how this reading implies a very rigid, *moral* view of what philosophy and, more importantly, *thinking* in general *should* be. Indeed, truth could never have been metaphysical if it renounced its claim to *value*: as a normative concept, it undertakes a project of devaluing experience (understood in a non-conceptual way) and corporeal life by establishing itself as being *worth more*. A philosopher *qua* lover of wisdom is the most principled person there is: he refuses to deceive and, more importantly, to *be deceived* by himself. According to Deleuze, Kant is here as dogmatic and as moral as all of the classical philosophers—he sticks to a moral view of truth and never dares to undertake the project of questioning the abovementioned connection between truth and thinking.

Nietzsche—The lover of questions (3)

For Nietzsche, the most problematic aspect of the previously given, classical reading of truth is actually not its tendency to launch truth into the sky (although this is not without its problems), but rather to tie thinking with truth so firmly that this *equation* is never questioned: this fundamental presupposition of how philosophy is to be done is never challenged. It is in light of this problem that Nietzsche starts asking problematic questions: namely, *Who is the philosopher?*, *Why is he seeking truth in the first place?*, *Where does this truth actually come from and how come that it is so innate?*, etc. The will to truth which had been nurtured for so long inside of the precious works of countless philosophers returns to its antecedents without the conceptual inhibitions which have been hitherto imposed on it: as Nietzsche says, the needs which have been implanted during the reign of moral and 'right' thinking have finally come out. For him, these questions have so much destructive power that they are able to *overturn* centuries of established thought—and this happens precisely because they came from the very edifice they are now seeking to demolish. What was obvious before—namely, that humans cannot attain 'unity' without leaving the world they inhabit, that truth seeks an essence beyond deceitful appearance—now seems to crumble: *Why favor truthfulness over deceit?*, *Why trust that truth as a vehicle of knowledge has the power of telling us something about life itself?* Nietzsche's conclusions would suggest precisely the contrary: a philosopher should never be a complacent actor in a contemplation which transcends himself and which he or she could never *actually* attain, he or she should rather be suspicious (something which is often conceived as an unwanted characteristic in society). Only by following his suspicions will the philosopher manage to challenge the current edifice and shed light on the often forgotten powers of desire, egoism, illusion and, what is more important, a dehierarchized space. Such a space which is created by

uncovering the suppressed *powers of the false* is, as we will try to argue in the next section, the space of the will to power understood through its creative tendency, and not through putting oneself in a privileged position of *judgment* which was forcibly taken away from the philosophical heritage. It is in this direction that we will try to elucidate the last sentence of the titular quotation: namely, by seeing how the antagonism between truth and untruth can only be done away with if the entire possibility of dichotomizing philosophical thinking is erased.

The will to power (4)

As we tried to anticipate at the end of the previous section, the will to power should not be understood as a will that *wants recognition*, as a supreme claim toward a privileged position which would not be susceptible to questioning. Such a *misreading*, to be exact, would propel us toward a mere inversion of the ancient position and would thus still be plagued by the same method which was used there: we would only be replacing the notion of truth with that of *untruth*, that is, we would still be making a *value judgment* and giving such a judgment complete power of directing our thinking. Instead of establishing new categories and returning to dogmatism—an act more akin to a medieval dethroning than a philosophical shock—we should opt to read the will to power as a supremely creative *movement* inherent to thought which never contents itself with considering its position as *better than* others. In order to better grasp the fundamental shift which is at work in this *overturning*, understanding the ontological presuppositions which led Nietzsche to such a reading might prove useful. Following Ruder Bošković's ideas which oppose substantialist atomism (a theory which has been a subject of more probing critique in the work of Gilbert Simondon) to a physics of *dynamism*, Nietzsche was persuaded into considering the world as an interplay of forces and affects which force us into considering the world as no longer static. It is easy to connect this dynamic view to what we have identified as Nietzsche's rejection of the static notion of truth itself: with the change of our view of the *ontological* constitution of the world, the *epistemological* and, as we will see, *ethical* renderings of it change as well. As such, Nietzsche chooses to no longer see 'values' apart from their surroundings and their inclusion in the dynamic field which determines them. This is an important shift because it has the power to lead us from the quotidian reading of Nietzsche as a life-denying nihilist who seeks to overturn values for the sake of overturning them, to a Deleuzian reading of Nietzsche which affirms life precisely by precluding transcendence from denying it. If, for example, egoism and favoring (one's own) *desire* over inhibition is seen to be nihilistic and detrimental to society, this is only because we have not ceased to think these tendencies in light of their particular properties, that is, their atomistic, non-relational, isolated existence. Contrary to this, Nietzsche thinks that no such abstraction or isolation is possible in so far as tendencies must be looked at from the point of view of their dynamic whole, that is, of the *manner of being* (*manière d'être*) of the person whose behavior these tendencies inhabit. It is at this point that we arrive at what we anticipated in the introduction: namely, understanding how the two general ways of being noble/base (which do not imply a dichotomy, but rather a

gradation and progression between the two) are by no means the same as, let us say, seeking truth/deceiving or being kind/being an egoist.

A noble style of life, a noble way of being involved in the world is *not worth more* than a base involvement, but rather characterizes the manner of being of those who *choose* to affirm or deny—actions which imply not only being, but *thinking* itself. Thus, thinking is no longer strung between right and wrong ways of approaching problems, it is not confined to the dichotomy between true and untrue answers (as in some kind of reductionist, normative logic), but is rather released in front of open and endless horizons of exploration. Thinking is no longer pressured to fit a certain transcendent bill, but urges the thinker to produce the values or concepts of his thinking himself according to his own way of being. Such a dynamic genesis of thought which does not adhere to pre-established expectations of what thought *should* produce or how it *should* go about this production offers a veritable possibility of shocking the thinker and the reader. As Deleuze emphasized throughout his career, *philosophy produces a shock to thought*.

Conclusion (5)

By way of concluding our discussion of the given quote, we would like to put more emphasis on the methodology behind Nietzsche's criticism of the philosophical tradition before him, a methodology which can be concisely summarized in a word whose usage Deleuze refashioned in his *Difference and Repetition* and which we repeatedly emphasized throughout the essay: *overturning (renversement)*. Just as Deleuze's overturning of Platonism must not imply a complete destruction of Plato's thinking (if only for the fact that it served as the stepping stone for a reformed formulation), so Nietzsche's overturning of the importance given to the notion of truth must not be understood as an assassination. What is rather implied in both approaches is actually the inversion of the accepted interpretation in hope of acquiring new insights or seeing the obverse, hidden side of the current edifice (literally, *l'envers* in French).¹ Thus, this notion allows both a consideration of what was presupposed in our inquiries and a constant reminder that our current inquiries are never without presuppositions of their own. The biggest lesson of Nietzsche is to be found precisely at this point: by traversing the antagonism and passing into a more fundamental plane of understanding and thinking, we are not annihilating what we have traversed. In Deleuze's vocabulary: thought without an image (which appears as a result of the destruction of the image of thought) must itself retain some kind of image in order to be further applied. The perennial task of philosophy begins and ends here.

¹ Another such usage of this notion of reversal can be found in Lacan, cf. *Seminar XVII, The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*