

Nietzsche's Account of Truth

Primary Sources:

Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense* (Handout)

Nietzsche, *The Gay Science*, Sections 110-112, 121, 246, 354, 355, 373 (Handout)

Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, Preface, Sections 1-2, 4, 10-11, 21-23, 39, 43, 207, 230, in Kaufmann, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, pp. 192-194, 199-202, 206-209, 218-222, 239-240, 243, 316-318, 349-352

Nietzsche, *The Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 12, in Kaufmann, *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, pp. 554-555

Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, "Reason in Philosophy" (Sections 1 and 6), "How the 'True World' Finally Became a Fable" (Handout)

Background:

These readings cover a wide range of Nietzsche's work concerning the issue of truth. It is important to notice that his views do not remain consistent throughout, as they evolved over time. In his early work *On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense*, Nietzsche seems to deny the existence of any Truth, but by *Twilight of the Idols*, he seems only to deny the truth of metaphysical claims (thus he is similar to Kant). Meanwhile, *The Gay Science* explores why we have and need "truths" in the first place, while being pretty rough on the sciences. *Beyond Good and Evil* continues in a similar vein, where he expresses his psychological methodology (e.g., "What in us really wants 'truth'?"), he introduces his theory of perspectivism, and he warns about nihilism. The section from *The Genealogy of Morals* also talks about perspectivism. [FYI: the readings above are ordered chronologically.]

Questions:

- What is Nietzsche's account of truth?
- Does Nietzsche believe that his own views are true?
- What does it mean to say that there are no facts, only interpretations? Is such a claim coherent?
- What is the significance of Nietzsche's claim that "we operate with a whole lot of things which do not exist, with lines, plains, bodies, atoms, divisible times, divisible spaces" (*Gay Science*, Section 112)?
- Why is science an "anthropomorphizing of things" (*Gay Science*, Section 112)?
- Is physics an interpretation (*Beyond Good and Evil*, Section 22)?
- How did "truth" come into the world according to Nietzsche (*Gay Science*, Sections 110ff)?
- Why did consciousness develop, in how far is it the "perspective of the herd" (*Gay Science*, Section 354)?
- What is perspectivism (*Genealogy of Morals*, Third Essay, Section 12)?
- Does Nietzsche believe that some interpretations are better than others?