

Art, Truth, and Illusion: Nietzsche's Metaphysical Skepticism

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I feel myself compelled to the metaphysical assumption that the truly existent primal unity, eternally suffering and contradictory, also needs the rapturous vision, the pleasurable illusion, for its continuous redemption (Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*¹).

Art and Illusion, Reality and Truth

Art creates illusions that vindicate reality. This is Nietzsche's claim in *The Birth of Tragedy*. What argument does Nietzsche offer in support of this claim? Reality is inaccessible to human cognition since the latter is finite and perspectival. A finite perspective, taken to be Real,² can only be an illusion. The illusions that displace reality become, for us, Reality. The only reality we can experience is reality-for-us. Reality, what we construe to be real independently of us, is an illusion because it is only real-for-us. If Truth is conceived as measured by adequacy to Reality, then the truth-for-us is that there is no Truth for us. Truth is an illusion produced through the perspectival nature of human cognition. This production is the source of art. Art devises illusions that displace reality.

Is this argument sound? That is, are the premises true and is the reasoning valid? What do the terms "truth" and "validity" signify in this context? This problem-nexus collects many of the issues Nietzsche addresses: the attack on religion and metaphysics; the revaluation of values dependent upon Western religion and metaphysics; the critique of *ressentiment* and affirmation of honesty; the thesis of radical perspectivism; the reconstitution of the project of science; the foundation of art in will to power, and so on. The focus here is on the issue of truth in art. Nietzsche displaces science as the exemplar of truth. Science is born of art, human creation; art sets an ideal of truth from which science draws. The supporting argument might be expressed as follows: Science models truth on adequacy to divine creation; a statement is true if it reflects what is the case independently of us, or what is the case from the divine (non-) perspective. The measure of truth is God's creation. But God is a human creation, a product of art. Therefore, the model of scientific truth must derive from finite human creation or art.

What is the model of truth operative here? Is it true from all perspectives that we create (all models of) truth? Or is it equally valid, from other perspectives, to say that the measure of truth lies beyond us?

Nietzsche's Early Writings

"It is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified" (*BT*, 52).

The most famous statement in *The Birth of Tragedy* calls upon art to justify or vindicate reality. Yet what is it to vindicate reality? In what senses does reality require vindication? If reality, as we conceive it, is the product of human art, then does art implicitly involve the burden of self-vindication? If art is required to justify its own creation, Reality, how would art go about doing this concretely? Does every artistic endeavor require metaphysical vindication, as, for example, the art of medieval painting, sculpture, music, and architecture based itself upon Christian theology and vindicated itself by appeal to that context? How could we measure the success or failure of any given attempt at self-vindication on the part of art? Finally, if art appeals to itself to justify itself, is this not a vicious circularity, a radical form of question-begging? How would one go about adjudicating between competing artistic claims to truth? If Diego Riviera's art is true, can Fragonard's art also be true? If Bach's "Magnificat" is true, can Richard Straus's "Also Sprach Zarathustra" also be true? What conception of truth is at work here?

Nietzsche argues again and again that it is impossible to judge or evaluate a perspective from within that perspective. The question of the value of existence cannot be decided from within existence.³ His argument is based on denial of the validity of circular reasoning. Life cannot take a perspective upon itself, therefore its attempts to vindicate itself are laughable because they beg the question, the question of the legitimacy of life's own perspective. Why would this argument not weigh equally against the attempt on the part of art to justify itself? What, then, of truth in art? What kind of truth is this?

In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche argues that Greek tragedy justifies existence and the world by offering metaphysical comfort. The view of the world it presents makes life bearable by making it meaningful. The appeal here is to aesthetic values: seeing things as beautiful vindicates them. *The Birth of Tragedy* was published in 1872. A second edition, little changed, appeared in 1878. In 1886, Nietzsche published a third edition containing his "Attempt at a Self-Criticism." In that "Attempt," he emphatically rejects the notion of metaphysical comfort, characterizing it as romantic and Christian.⁴ What does this portend for the dictum that "it is only as an aesthetic phenomenon that existence and the world are eternally justified?" What ramifications does this turn-about have for the concept of truth in art or for the role of art in determining truth?

I shall develop the thesis that Nietzsche initially adopts, but subsequently rejects, the notion of Truth as it is defined within the context of an ontology of Being. In this context, "True" means eternal and unchanging, and necessarily appeals to a divine or infinite knower. The truths that he subsequently asserts are those commensurate with an ontology of becoming, where things come into existence and pass away, where truth about things evolves as things and our understanding of them change. A consistency problem arises when one asks the critical or recursive question: is it abidingly true that truth changes with time?

In the "Attempt," Nietzsche writes: "all of life is based on semblances [*Schein*], art, deception [*Täuschung*], points of view, and the necessity of perspectives and error" (*BT*, 23; *W*, 1, 15). This allows me to sharpen the question: What content can be given to the notion of truth within the context of Nietzsche's perspectivism? Are all points of view equally semblance and deception? Or are some appearances (*Erscheinungen*) truer or better than others? Is it possible to adjudicate among the truth claims of competing perspectives? I think it is. More evidence supports the perspective that says the earth is spherical than supports the claim that it is flat. Yet both remain perspectives. Problems remain, however. Is this an appeal to utility, to a pragmatic theory of truth? Does it depend on the "all-too-human" aspects of human pleasures, pains, and pursuits? Would it then be true to say that God exists if belief in God can be shown to be useful? What about ugly truths that appear at least to have no utility, for example, the Dionysian truth that we shall all die after a period of suffering? Or the truth contained in the wisdom of Silenus that the greatest good for human beings is never to have been born?

The Noble Lie: Nietzsche's Early Skepticism and Totalitarianism

Nietzsche has become famous as an advocate of the "useful fiction." There are arguments that tend in this direction throughout Nietzsche's work, as well as arguments to the contrary. In fact, even in his early work, Nietzsche expresses contempt for taking pleasure and happiness as viable human ends.⁵ We shall return to this, but even now it seems clear that Nietzsche does not espouse the doctrine of truth as utility as it is often propounded, instead calling for the affirmation of life in its harshest aspects, even when it threatens our comfort and security. "Useful fiction" means, in my reading of Nietzsche, finite truth: it is not True but necessary for life, where this means empirically grounded, like causal reasoning. Like causal reasoning, finite truth permits us to adjudicate among competing views. The point here is that the usefulness criterion tacitly appeals to a notion of truth. In the short run, luck may produce

a useful result from a false belief—as Kepler’s hypothesis that the ratios among geometrical solids matched the spatial relations between planets led to his discovery of their elliptical orbits—but in the long run one depends on luck as a last resort. To entrust one’s fortune to luck is to abandon phronesis, and in that sense is antiphilosophical. As we witness in *Ecce Homo*, Nietzsche assiduously incorporates phronesis in his own living: he pays serious attention to his diet.

There is another notion of “useful fiction” that warrants mention. In *The Philosopher: Reflections on the Struggle Between Art and Knowledge*, an unpublished manuscript drafted in 1872, Nietzsche argues that cultural unity transcends utility; cultural unity, not happiness, produces great achievement.⁶ Cultural unity is achieved by mastery on the part of creator/commanders, mastery that entails subjugation of the lesser. The noble lie or “beautiful illusion”⁷ is one of the means by which this process of unification by mastery takes place. It is generally acknowledged that Nietzsche is an elitist. This elitism can be mitigated by taking it to be an affirmation of the lonely and vulnerable individual who exposes himself to the “flies of the marketplace” out of altruistic motives. The solitary truth seeker is also a bodhisatva, one who returns to the cave to shed light, knowing ahead of time that he is taking his life in his hands. The *Untergehen* of Zarathustra can be read this way.

The political (as opposed to individual) elitism in the early Nietzsche, however, is more troublesome. Nietzsche’s great contempt for democracy and socialism as political philosophies is well known. His arguments are consonant with Plato’s argument in *Republic* VIII that if power is vested in the demos then the lowest common denominator will prevail: pleasure and sloth will govern the social entity; it will lose its vitality, lapse into heteronomy, and fall prey to tyranny. Nietzsche’s specific concern is that democracy endangers the cultural unity required for the production of great art. The task of the artist-philosopher is to generate—and enforce—this unifying vision.

In his early works Nietzsche affirms a form of political elitism pointed in the direction of totalitarianism.⁸ The program for bringing about cultural unity that he advocates requires creator-commanders, artists and philosophers, to circumscribe the quest for unlimited knowledge—dissipated into heteronomy by science—within the parameters of a governing metaphor or vision, just as world religions have generated cultural unity through promulgation and enforcement of their visions of Reality. “The philosopher of the future? He must become the supreme tribunal of an artistic culture, *the police force, as it were, against all transgressions.*”⁹

The philosopher-artist is the myth builder who creates an illusion among the masses that allows him to manifest his conception of greatness and nobility—like Plato’s philosopher-king, but with one important difference.

Although Plato advocates making use of the noble lie on the part of his rulers, he is in general opposed to myth because it is mere illusion, divorced from truth. In this early work, Nietzsche takes the contrary view. The only value criterion he admits is aesthetic; neither moral nor epistemological foundations survive Nietzsche's skepticism: "All that philosophy can do [in this time of cultural vacuity] is to emphasize the relativity and anthropomorphic character of all knowledge, as well as the all pervasive ruling power of illusion" (*The Philosopher*, sec. 41, p. 13).

Whether or not a religion is able to establish itself here within this vacuum depends upon its strength. *We* are committed to *culture*: the 'German' as a *redeeming* force! In any case, that religion which would be able so to establish itself would have to possess an immense *power of love*—against which knowledge would shatter as it does against the language of art. But might not art itself perhaps be capable of creating a religion, of giving birth to myth? This was the case among the Greeks (*The Philosopher*, sec. 39, p. 13).

The prime example of the use of the beautiful lie for political ends in Nietzsche is the myths or lies used by the "priestly caste" to control their flocks, to bend the wills of the lesser to the ends of the greater. This strategy is affirmed in the writings, both published and unpublished, of the 1870s, that is, during the phase in which he wrote *The Birth of Tragedy*. Later, however, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, Nietzsche opposes this strategy. He condemns the priestly caste who mobilize the *ressentiment* of the masses and turn it to their own purposes. He repudiates religion, exactly the kind of myth used to foster a set of values that allowed the priests to overthrow the warrior class. What led Nietzsche to this about-face? We can do more than merely speculate about his motives and reasons; it is possible, I think, to be confident about the flaws in the early position, and the nature of the standpoint Nietzsche later adopted. One can trace the drift of the thought that guided Nietzsche, find it articulating itself in his writings. That is what I am attempting to do here.

The rift with Wagner is significant. When Nietzsche wrote *The Birth of Tragedy*, Wagner represented the heroic artist who created the myth that would unify German culture. By 1886, Nietzsche regarded Wagner as a posturing Svengali who sought popularity by pandering to the rising tide of German nationalism. In my view, this is emblematic of the shift in Nietzsche's thinking that I am attempting to trace. The point of departure for Nietzsche's early writings was that of skepticism and the nihilism that is its handmaiden. As Breazeale puts it:

The prevailing epistemological mood of the notebooks of the early 1870s is one of profound nihilism, with respect both to the possibility of genuine knowledge and the value of seeking it. But in these writings, Nietzsche not only gave eloquent expression to his doubts on the subject of knowledge, he connected these doubts with their theoretical presuppositions and consequences. That is to say, he developed an *analysis* of the nature of knowledge, which he conjoined with an *argument* designed to show how skepticism unavoidably follows from the naive pursuit of truth (*PT*, xxviii).

Skepticism leads to nihilism because there are no grounds on the basis of which to claim superiority for one set of values or beliefs against its competitors. Skepticism can also lead to tolerance: just as I cannot prove the superiority of my views to yours, nor can you prove the reverse. In my view, tolerance here is short-lived, simply because it has no warrant. Why tolerate your view if it seriously threatens mine in the political arena? If I have the power to subjugate you and obliterate your view, my aesthetic imperative calls upon me to do just that. The question of truth is not politically neutral. For absolutists, it allows for the tyranny we know so well; we are justified by the truth of our cause. But for skeptics, it also allows for tyranny; nobody can say we are wrong. To abandon all epistemological and moral criteria as illusory, however, is to forsake the possibility of rational debate. Competition defaults to the exercise of political power through any means available.

In these early works, Nietzsche advocates the use of illusion to gain political mastery. I have been arguing that the skepticism to which Nietzsche appeals to justify this use of illusion centers around the conflation of perspectival appearances (i.e., phenomena, perceptions, *Erscheinung*) and illusion (*Schein*). I want now to take a deeper look at this skepticism, and try to understand the larger epistemological framework within which Nietzsche is working in this period of the early 1870s.

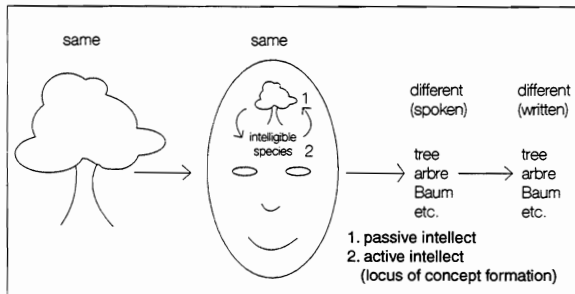
Nietzsche's Early Epistemology

The classical model against which Kant, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche all argue is summarized in the opening paragraph of Aristotle's *De Interpretatione*. The diagram is my interpretation.

Spoken words are the symbols of mental experience and written words are the symbols of spoken words. Just as all men have not the same writing, so all men have not the same speech sounds, but the mental

experiences, which these directly symbolize, are the same for all, as also are those things of which our experiences are the images (16a1–8).

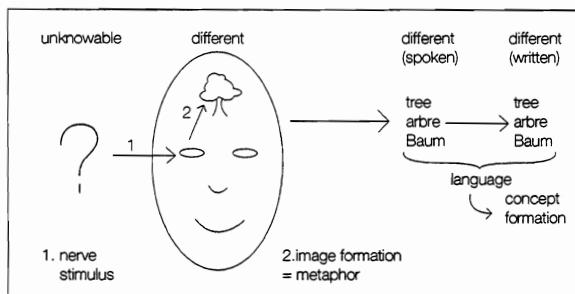
This might be diagrammed as follows:



Let us look at the model Nietzsche sets out in the early texts before us.

The various languages placed side by side show that with words it is never a question of truth, never a question of adequate expression; otherwise, there would not be so many languages. The 'thing in itself' (which is precisely what the pure truth, apart from any of its consequences, would be) is likewise something quite incomprehensible to the creator of language and something not in the least worth striving for. This creator only designates the relations of things to men, and for expressing these relations he lays hold of the boldest metaphors.¹⁰ To begin with, a nerve stimulus is transferred into an image: first metaphor. The image, in turn, is imitated in a sound: second metaphor. And each time there is a complete overleaping of one sphere, right into the middle of an entirely new and different one.... It is this way with all of us concerning language: we believe that we know something about the things themselves when we speak of trees, colors, snow, and flowers; and yet we possess nothing but metaphors for things—metaphors which correspond in no way to the original entities.¹¹

Here is how I would diagram this:



This is more or less the same schema as what Aristotle sets forth, but with two important differences. First, the image/representation is not the same as the thing, but merely the effect of the nerve stimulus.¹² Second, the representation is not the same among all people.¹³

Artists generate the metaphors that govern how we see things. They establish conventions that vary from culture to culture. Hence, it is not the case that all human beings have the same image when they look at a given thing. The next point centers on the familiar distinction between categorial perception and seeing things in their ipseity or individual suchness. Nietzsche argues that concept formation proceeds by ignoring individual differences among things collected under a category or genus: "every concept arises from the equation of unequal things" (*TL*, 83).¹⁴ In order to assert this in a self-referentially consistent way, Nietzsche would have to maintain that we can both see individuals as individuals and note the difference between the single instance and the generic image or concept. He must assert both that we see things before the images are mediated by concepts and that we cannot see things except as mediated by concepts.¹⁵ The very notion of an "individual"¹⁶ or "original perceptual metaphor" (*TL*, 86) is an oxymoron on Nietzsche's own account, since the metaphors of which language is constructed are *relational*; they depend on perceiving things through the similarities among them as viewed from the perspective of human interest.

Anticipating a doctrine later espoused by Derrida, Nietzsche argues that the process of categorial cognition goes on at the unconscious level: "Unconscious thinking must take place apart from concepts: it must therefore occur in perceptions [*Anschauungen*]" (*P*, 41). Make the unconscious history- and culture-dependent—that is, language-dependent—and the conclusion is that sensory stimuli, Nietzsche's "nerve impulses," produce different images or representations in different human beings. This leads to radical skepticism.

What then is truth? A movable host of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and embellished, and which, after long usage, seem to a people to be fixed, canonical, and binding. Truths are illusions which we have forgotten are illusions; they are metaphors that have become worn out and have been drained of sensuous force... (*TL*, 84).

The ramifications of Nietzsche's early skepticism, or the radical cognitive pessimism he adopts, are well known. It entails a denial of both Platonic idealism and Aristotelian essentialism, the forerunners of contemporary transcendentalism and empiricism: there can be no type or genus known

to exist in the world independent of human classification; the world is carved up in as many ways as there have been successful creators—and enforcers—of metaphorical systems.¹⁷ Another correlate of Nietzsche's radical skepticism is an equally radical thesis of nominalism or conventionalism: the meaning of things is determined by a sheerly creative fiat of metaphor construction which cannot be constrained by the demands of things to be seen in one way rather than another.¹⁸ Truth becomes a matter of convention.¹⁹

These epistemological consequences of Nietzsche's early thinking have been generally acknowledged, even widely affirmed, by contemporary Nietzsche scholars, but the political consequences seem to have been overlooked, perhaps because they are so noxious. Nietzsche's early totalitarianism is couched in benign forms: "There can be neither society nor culture without untruth. The tragic conflict. Everything which is good and beautiful depends upon illusion..." (*TL* 92); "The truest things in this world are love, religion, and art" (*TL*, 95). Yet it is totalitarianism nonetheless, one that is quite willing to enlist the philosopher of the future in the "police force ... against all transgressions." The art that generates the redeeming lie is "that art which rules over life" (*TL*, 12).

Summary and Prospect

The skepticism that produces Nietzsche's totalitarianism is itself grounded in the dualistic ontology that governs his thinking in the early writings. The aspect of this dualism at stake here is the binary opposition between Being and becoming. Being is the domain of immutable Truth, the domain of gods. Nietzsche's creator genius, his ideal artist, is an earthly god who creates the vision that serves the religious purpose of unifying culture, determining history, justifying existence and redeeming it through the beautiful lie: "Only insofar as the genius in the act of artistic creation coalesces with [the] primordial artist of the world, does he know anything of the eternal essence of art..." (*BT*, 52).

The artist, in creating gods, becomes god and supreme ruler through the vehicle of the beautiful illusion, the illusion whose "truth" is grounded in the absolute rule of the "aesthetic criterion," the "only criterion that counts" for Nietzsche in this phase of his thinking. The artist as creator-commander is benign, as Dostoevsky's "Grand Inquisitor" was benign: he produces "meta-physical comfort."

The warrant for the rule of the creative genius is skepticism, the utter absence of veridical cognition.²⁰ The warrant for skepticism is perspectivalism. Truth is defined in terms of Being, of a divine view inaccessible to humankind. Only Being can justify beings, offer the divine wisdom that is capable of

countering the worldly wisdom of Silenus, and redeem the tragedy of finitude, becoming, pain, and death. The inaccessibility of Being creates a void which the artist's beautiful lie fills. Such lies constitute the history of a people. As such, they are historical, but they are lived in the ahistorical mode, that is, they are lived as abiding Truth. They are, in other words, lived dishonestly.²¹

It is my view that Nietzsche abandons this standpoint in his later writings, indeed that he argues against it and develops an antithetical philosophical orientation. While I cannot develop that case in detail here, allow me to offer a preliminary sketch of it.

The skepticism-aestheticism-totalitarianism of Nietzsche's early work is grounded in the logic of Being, in the binary opposition of finite perspectives or untruth and the infinite non-perspective of Truth. As early as *The Gay Science* and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, Nietzsche deliberately shifts to the logic of becoming, a logic incipient in the early work but in a privative or latent mode. The epistemological consequences of this shift take a while to surface, but they manifest themselves as a change from Nietzsche's early *identification* of finite perspective or appearance (*Erscheinung*) and untruth or illusion (*Schein*) to his later attempt to separate the two. This separation allows Nietzsche to acknowledge the finite truth of appearances, and it is this that allows him to abandon the epistemological and moral nihilism of his early years.

Nietzsche remained a polemical thinker throughout his productive life. This had the negative effect of luring him into the very binary oppositions he later sought to resolve, and kept those resolutions from full conceptual realization. But his polemics also committed him to defend the truth of his own views and to expose the lies of antagonists such as Socrates, Kant, Schopenhauer, and the rest. Nietzsche needed to develop a theory of truth commensurate with the ontology of becoming, of overcoming and self-transcendence, that drives his sense of historical purpose.

In order for there to be a difference between illusion (*Schein*) and appearance (*Erscheinung*)—that is, if the thesis of radical skepticism and the beautiful lie it enfranchises are to be ruled out—then appearances have to be regularly constrained, delimited, or configured. Our perspectives must both have a measure and provide a measure. This is the thought that begins to articulate itself through Nietzsche's writings of the 1880s.

Notes

1. Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Birth of Tragedy*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *The Birth of Tragedy and the Case of Wagner* (New York: Random House, 1967), pp. 44–5. Hereafter cited as *BT*.

2. I have adopted here the convention of capitalizing such terms as “Real” and “True” when the reality and truth they designate is conceived in absolute, infinite, or non-perspectival ways.

3. “Judgments, judgments of value, concerning life, for it or against it, can, in the end, never be true: they have value only as symptoms, they are worthy of consideration only as symptoms; in themselves such judgments are stupidities.... The value of life cannot be estimated. Not by the living, for they are an interested party.” Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, “The Problem of Socrates,” trans. Walter Kaufmann, in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Viking Press, 1954), p. 474. Hereafter cited as *TI*.

4. “Would it not be necessary for the tragic man ... to desire a new art, the *art of metaphysical comfort* [*die Kunst des metaphysischen Trostes*]...? —No, thrice no! O you young romantics: it would not be necessary! But it is highly probable that it will *end* that way, that *you* end that way—namely ‘comforted,’ as it is written, in spite of all self-education for seriousness and terror, ‘comforted metaphysically’—in sum, as romantics end, as *Christians*” (*BT*, 26). *Friedrich Nietzsche Werke*, herausgegeben von Karl Schleiermacher (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1956), Band 1, p. 18. Hereafter cited as *W* followed by volume number.

5. We fear what threatens to disrupts our tranquillity. This grounds utilitarian morality which Nietzsche traces to Platonic eudaimonism, the position that only ignorance leads to bad acts, that good acts flow from those who know what is in their own self-interest: “This type of inference smells of the rabble that sees nothing in bad actions but the unpleasant consequences and really judges, ‘it is stupid to do what is bad,’ while ‘good’ is taken without further ado to be identical with ‘useful and agreeable.’ In the case of every moral utilitarianism one may immediately infer the same origin and follow one’s nose: one will rarely go astray.” Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil*, trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Random House, 1966), p. 103. Nietzsche yearns for something higher than the useful, and is willing to suffer pain to get there. Utilitarianism is associated with leveling out in his mind, a necessary byproduct of the social contract to achieve comfort

by refraining from threatening one another.

6. "The problem of *culture* is seldom grasped correctly. The goal of a culture is not the greatest possible *happiness* of a people, nor is it the unhindered development of *all* their talents; instead, culture shows itself in the correct *proportion* of these developments. Its aim points beyond earthly happiness: the production of great works is the aim of culture." *The Philosopher: Reflections on the Struggle Between Art and Knowledge*, trans. Daniel Breazeale, in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870s*, ed. Daniel Breazeale (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1990), p. 16. *Philosophy and Truth* will hereafter be cited as *PT*.

7. "When one considers ... the *value* of knowledge, and, on the other hand, a beautiful illusion which has exactly the same value as an item of knowledge—provided only that it is an illusion in which one believes—then one realizes that life requires illusions, i.e., untruths which are taken to be truths. What life does require is belief in truth, but illusion is sufficient for this. That is to say, 'truths' do not establish themselves by means of logical proofs, but by means of their effects; proofs of strength. The true and the effective are taken to be identical; here too one submits to force." *The Philosopher*, in *PT*, pp. 16–7.

8. Support for regarding the early Nietzsche as espousing a form of totalitarian thought may be found in the following passages from *The Philosopher*: "The entire life of a people reflects in an unclear and confused manner the image [Bild] offered by their highest geniuses. The geniuses are not the product of the masses, but the masses show their effects.... There is an invisible bridge from genius to genius which constitutes the genuinely real 'history' of a people" (sec. 17, p. 3). "The philosopher is a self-revelation of nature's workshop; the philosopher and the artist tell the trade secrets of nature.... Together with art, [philosophers] step into the place vacated by myth" (sec. 24, p. 6). "Science is totally dependent upon philosophical opinions for all of its goals.... That philosophy which gains control also has to consider the problem of the level to which science should be permitted to develop: it has to determine value.... Philosophy reveals its highest worth when it concentrates the unlimited knowledge drive and subdues it to unity" (sec. 28, 30, pp. 8–9). "The last philosopher ... demonstrates the necessity of illusions, of art, and of that art which rules over life.... The only criterion which counts for us is the aesthetic criterion" (sec. 38, 41, pp. 12–3).

9. *The Philosopher*, sec. 59, p. 22. Emphasis added.

10. The "creator of language" described here corresponds closely to the "genius in the act of artistic creation" (*BT*, 52) described as the source of the unifying vision in *The Birth of Tragedy* and *The Philosopher*.

11. Nietzsche, *On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense* (1873), trans. Breazeale, in *PT*, pp. 82–3. Hereafter *TL*.

12. Note that Nietzsche is here violating his own injunction against causal explanation. Just as Kant does.

13. This point has yet to be demonstrated, but will be defended shortly. Support for it now, however, can be found in the following passages: "The illusion which is involved in the artistic transference of a nerve stimulus into images is, if not the mother, then the grandmother of every single concept" (*TL*, 85). "It is not true that the essence of things 'appears' in the empirical world" (*TL*, 86).

14. "Every word instantly becomes a concept precisely insofar as it is not supposed to serve as a reminder of the unique and entirely individual original experience to which it owes its origin; but rather, a word becomes a concept insofar as it simultaneously has to fit countless more or less similar cases—which means, purely and simply, cases which are never equal and thus altogether unequal. Every concept arises from the equation of unequal things" (*TL*, 83). Nietzsche distinguishes the rational person who operates through categorial reason (Apollo) from the intuitive person who sees things as unique and individual (Dionysus), and describes the latter as happy and redeemed by illusion and beauty (*TL*, 90).

15. See *TL*, 81 where Nietzsche argues that "a uniformly valid and binding designation is invented for things, and this legislation of language likewise establishes the first laws of truth. For the contrast between truth and lie arises here for the first time." He illustrates this claim with the example of the liar as one who sees something as it is ("I am poor") but misrepresents it in language ("I am rich"). If we cannot see things except through universally binding concepts, there can be no lie. Liars must be able to work within language and also to work upon it from without.

16. "Each perceptual metaphor is individual and without equals and is therefore able to elude all classification" (*TL*, 84–5).

17. "The genesis of language does not proceed logically in any case, and all the material within and with which the man of truth, the scientist, and the philosopher later work and build, if not derived from never-never land, is at least not derived from the essence of things" (TL, 83).

18. "This is how matters stand regarding seeking and finding 'truth' within the realm of reason. If I make up the definition of a mammal, and then, after inspecting a camel, declare 'look, a mammal,' I have indeed brought a truth to light in this way, but it is a truth of limited value. That is to say, it is a thoroughly anthropomorphic truth which contains not a single point which would be 'true in itself' or really and universally valid apart from man. At bottom, what the investigator of such truths is seeking is only the metamorphosis of the world into man" (TL, 85–6).

19. "To be truthful means to employ the usual metaphors. Thus, to express it morally, this is the duty to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie with the herd and in a manner binding upon everyone. Now man of course forgets that this is the way things stand for him. Thus he lies in the manner indicated, unconsciously and in accordance with habits which are centuries old; and *precisely by means of this unconsciousness* and forgetfulness he arrives at this sense of truth" (TL, 84).

20. "Truth cannot be recognized. Everything which is knowable is illusion. The significance of art as truthful illusion" (TL, 97).

21. "How is it that art is only possible as a lie? ... Art includes the delight of awakening belief by means of surfaces. But one is not really deceived! [If one were] then art would cease to be. Art works through deception—yet one which does not deceive us? What is the source of the pleasure we take in deception which we have already tried, in an illusion which is always recognized as illusion? Thus art treats *illusion as illusion*; therefore it does not wish to deceive; it *is true*" (TL, sec. 184, p. 96). This conception of the truth of art, its lucidity with regard to its means and claims, is incompatible with the beautiful lie that is politically effective. The contradiction tacitly acknowledged here is explicitly confronted in the "Attempt" and other works of the 1880s.