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AN ATTEMPT AT UNDERSTANDING NIETZSCHE'S 'ON TRUTH AND LYING IN
AN EXTRA-MORAL SENSE'

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a reflection upon and evaluation of Nietzsche's conception of language as presented in his early and posthumously published essay *On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense*. I take Nietzsche in *On Truth and Lying* to be launching a full scale attack on traditional accounts of language and truth. He counters such conceptions by presenting what he takes to be the "forgotten" origin of language, which he presents as consisting of a threefold process of metaphor formation. This conception of the origin of language is rather technical and, as I will try to show, is doing quite a lot of work for Nietzsche, not only in his criticisms of other philosophies of language, but also in much of his later writings.

What becomes manifest throughout this analysis of Nietzsche's writings is a form of linguistic skepticism; however, I will try to show that Nietzsche's conception of the origin of language is not bereft of its own metaphysical assumptions. I will try to show that his conception of the origin of language is a variation upon an already prevalent philosophical conception of language, one that presupposes a certain metaphysical gap between language and reality; thus, Nietzsche's continuous criticisms of the failure of language are due, not to surveying language at work and finding it wanting, but rather to already having something very similar to what I will call an *imagistic* conception of

language. I will then introduce Wittgenstein (particularly his discussion of pain) to show that what manifests itself in Nietzsche's account of language as a threefold process of metaphor formation is that Nietzsche is only thinking of our relation to reality upon what I will call a spectator-spectacle model. Only by generalizing the application of this model to characterize our dealings in and with the world does there seem to be a gap between language and reality. I will then show that Wittgenstein does a great deal to reduce the force of this model and thereby revealing Nietzsche's pronouncements on the failure of language to capture the becoming that is life to be unfounded.

INTRODUCTION

In his essay *On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense*¹ Nietzsche boldly defines truth as “a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms, in short, a sum of human relations which were poetically and rhetorically heightened, transferred, and adorned, and after long use seem solid, canonical, and binding to a nation” (*UWL*, p. 250). For many, especially those who have contemplated truth, or gone so far as to take up the arduous task of theorizing about it, this definition would seem to be putting the cart before the horse. Indeed, most would declare that metaphors, metonyms, anthropomorphisms etc. are only possible by virtue of a pre-existing and fixed literal meaning of our words upon which the metaphoric is parasitic. Of course, what is to be counted among this pre-existing and fixed lot of the literal may be disputed, but certainly most would not, as Nietzsche does, say that propositions such as “The stone is hard” (*UWL*, p. 248), or claims pertaining to trees, colors, snow, and flowers are all metaphors (*UWL*, p. 249). For sure, they may be false or spoken with the intent to deceive, but metaphors?!² If Nietzsche is correct in his account of language and truth then what has

¹ All references to ‘On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense’ are from a collection of Nietzsche’s lectures and unpublished writings on language and rhetoric entitled *Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language*, ed. & trans. Gilman, Blair and Parent (Oxford University Press), 1989. Hereafter referred to as *UWL*, and indicating page numbers in parentheses in the text.

² None of the preceding sentences are meant to be critical of (and even less derogatory towards) Nietzsche’s definition, it is just to point out and stress how radically removed it is from traditional (and most contemporary) conceptions of truth.

humanity overlooked³ that has led her to think she can speak with any certainty and authority about reality and her relation to it? Or perhaps the more pointed question (because it is pointed at Nietzsche rather than humanity) would be this: If Nietzsche is correct in his conception of truth how can *he* speak with any certainty and authority about how things are? That is, if he is correct are not *his* claims about truth amounting to nothing more than a mobile army of metaphors etc. just that, metaphors? And if so, then how can *they* be correct or true? How are we supposed to understand this paradoxical account of truth and language?

I will begin by trying to provide a perspicuous account of Nietzsche's conception of truth and language as presented in *On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense*. Language is not only something over which Nietzsche had an almost unparalleled command, but, like the rhapsode Ion in Plato's *Ion* - who could both speak Homer beautifully and "speak more finely than anyone else *about* Homer"⁴ - Nietzsche has some very interesting and provocative things to say *about* language and truth, and in this early and posthumously published essay are some of Nietzsche's most sustained (even if not the most clear) pronouncements of his conception of them both. So it is well worth coming to terms with *On Truth and Lying* even if only for the purposes of getting a clearer understanding of Nietzsche's progression as a writer in general and as a philosopher in particular.

³ Or as Nietzsche says, 'forgotten'.

I take Nietzsche in *On Truth and Lying* to be launching a full scale attack on traditional accounts of language and truth. Indeed, because he considers *our* language to be founded upon an illusory metaphysics of essence he sees not only traditional accounts of language, but the very language that we speak, as being a misconstruing of our relation to reality and the role that language plays in that relation. He counters this by presenting what he takes to be the “forgotten” origin of language, which he presents as consisting of a threefold process of metaphor formation. According to this account, far from being representations of reality, our words are creatively formed metaphors. This conception of the origin of language as a process of metaphor formation is rather technical and, as I will try to show, is doing quite a lot of work for Nietzsche, not only in his criticisms of other philosophies of language, but also in much of his later writings. That is, I see much of Nietzsche’s conception of language as presented in *On Truth and Lying* as playing a major role in his continuous pronouncements that reality - which is a reality of “becoming”, of “flux” - is only falsified when attempted to be captured by language - a language of “being”, of “fixity”. Indeed, I highlight that this very important (and very Nietzschean) theme is already present in *On Truth and Lying* in his comparison of language - our “edifice of concepts” - to Roman Columbaria.

What becomes manifest throughout this analysis of Nietzsche’s writings is a form of linguistic skepticism which stems from his account of the origin of language as a

⁴ Plato, *Ion*. Translated by W.R.M Lamb. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press (Plato, vol. 8 of the

process of metaphor formation. However, I will try to show that Nietzsche's conception of the origin of language is not bereft of its own metaphysical assumptions. I will try to show that his conception of the origin of language is a variation upon an already prevalent philosophical conception of language, one that presupposes a certain metaphysical gap between language and reality; thus, Nietzsche's continuous criticisms of the failure of language are due, not to surveying language at work and finding it wanting, but rather to already having something very similar to what I will call an *imagistic* conception of language. I will then introduce Wittgenstein (particularly his discussion of pain) to show that what manifests itself in Nietzsche's account of language as a threefold process of metaphor formation is that Nietzsche is only thinking of our relation to reality upon what I will call a spectator-spectacle model. Only by generalizing the application of this model to characterize our dealings in and with the world does there seem to be a gap between language and reality. I will then show that Wittgenstein does a great deal to reduce the force of this model and thereby revealing Nietzsche's pronouncements on the failure of language to capture the becoming that is life to be unfounded.

I. Nietzsche's Nemeses: The "Forgetful" Philosophers and the Scientistic Minded

From the very first sentence of *On Truth and Lying* one is instantly aware of the

unorthodox and unabashedly mocking attitude towards the much lauded and valorized quest (or as Nietzsche calls it “drive” or “will”) for knowledge and truth: “In some remote corner of the universe that is poured out in countless flickering solar systems, there once was a star on which clever animals invented knowledge” (*UWL*, p. 246). However, what is most striking about this opening passage is not the mocking tone, nor is it that those who participate in this supposed quest for knowledge are portrayed as nothing more than “clever” beasts. What is by far the most striking and most unorthodox is that they are portrayed as *inventors* rather than as *discoverers*. As one of the most predominant views of truth would have it, truth is precisely that which *is not* invented; truth, they would say, is that which simply *is*, universally, immutably and independently of us. In Book X of Plato’s *Republic* Socrates expresses this very notion of truth when he says: “There turn out, then, to be these three kinds of couches: one that *is* in nature, which we would say, I suppose, a god produced...And then one that the carpenter produced...and one that the painter produced”⁵, and all those who were present agreed. The *true* couch is the one whose form is contained in nature and is sought after and imitated by the carpenter. We might also see the carpenter as analogous to what Nietzsche calls the “concept-former”, where, for example, the concept “couch” is correctly formed (and used) by its correspondence with the form which is found in

⁵ Plato, *Republic*, Trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1991). 597b (Bloom’s italics). I should point out that I think it is a serious and open question as to whether Socrates’ expression of this notion of truth is synonymous with his adherence to or profession of this notion (let alone Plato’s). For a very cogent and ‘fine’ reading along these lines of Plato in general and the *Republic* in particular, see Fendt and

nature. The painter or, more generally, the artist, is then an imitator of the first and more accurate imitation, which only further removes the artist from the actual truth. Upon this notion of truth any artistic creation is dependent, not only on the *form* which is embedded in nature, but also upon the correct and literal imitation of the form by the carpenter/concept-former.

Perhaps a more recent rendition of this notion of truth - of course with its own variations - is the positivistic idea that truth obtains when our language conforms to or *mirrors* the world in some determinate way. This conception of truth plays a large role in much of early analytic philosophy and I am thinking particularly of its presentation in Wittgenstein's *Tractatus-Logico-Philosophicus*, in which he sets out to draw a limit between the world and everything else⁶ –“The world is all that is the case”⁷ – and the limit has been drawn in language –“The world is the totality of facts, not of things” (*TLP*, 1.2). In language the limit is drawn between propositions describing possible “states of affairs” (i.e. possible “combinations of objects”), and all other language. When a

Rozema (1998).

⁶ Of course, the author of the *Tractatus* (and the positivists that follow his lead) ardently consider the world to be *all that is the case*, so I admit it is a bit odd to say that a limit is being drawn between the world (all there is) and...well, what are we to say here? What is interesting about the *Tractatus* is that logic, along with religion, ethics and aesthetics, are “transcendental”, that is, *outside* all that is the case (*TLP*, 6.13 and 6.421), outside that which can be said. Thus, as odd as it may sound, the *Tractatus* itself falls *outside* all that is the case (i.e. the world). Hence the reason that the *Tractatus* ends in silence - “What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence” (*TLP*, 7). So, when I say that in the *Tractatus* a limit is being drawn between the world and everything else, that which falls into the category of ‘everything else’ is to be passed over in silence; it might be said: *everything* works just as well as *nothing* about which nothing can be said.

⁷ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, trans. D.F. Pears and B.F. McGuinness (London and New York: Routledge Classics, 2004), p. 5. Further references to the *Tractatus* will be given in the

proposition describes an actual state of affairs, an actual combination of objects in the world, that proposition is *true*. A true proposition is a fact and “the facts in logical space are the world” (*TLP*, 1.13) Thus, the limit that is drawn between the world and everything else⁸ can be seen in language between the propositions asserting possible and actual states of affairs in logical space and everything outside of this space respectively. And the limit, claims the author of the *Tractatus*, must be drawn in language for it is only in language that that which allows for the possibility of saying something true about the world (i.e. “logical form”) can be shown - that it is only in language that “logical form” can be shown marks an important distinction here from a Platonic or Essentialist conception of truth. For upon the *Tractarian* conception of truth, “logical form” is not something else added on, not some other thing (such as a Platonic form or embedded Essence); rather, it is the form of the very objects themselves (and the form of the thoughts and descriptions of such objects). One of the examples the author of the *Tractatus* gives to illustrate this point is of the links of a chain (*TLP*, 2.03). There is nothing other than the links themselves and the form that they take that constitutes their connection: “Propositions can represent the whole of reality, but they cannot represent what they must have in common with reality in order to be able to represent it--logical form...What finds its reflection in language, language cannot represent” (*TLP*, 4.12-1).

So upon the Socratic view there is a form that is imitated or mirrored by the

text as *TLP* following the numbered divisions made by Wittgenstein.

carpenter/concept-former and when this is done correctly the upshot is *truth*. In the *Tractarian* view there is an isomorphism that obtains when a thought and its expression in a proposition share the same logical form as that of the world or reality, and the upshot of this isomorphism is a *true* thought and proposition. In both cases there is a universal, immutable and independent form that is embedded in or informs reality to which our concepts conform, and this conformation is *truth*.

Only due to a certain form of selective “forgetfulness”, says Nietzsche, could such views of truth and language be formulated. He also contends that there is a certain charm - along with a sense of security without which communal life would be rendered intolerable⁹ - that these views have that makes this forgetfulness all the more possible and alluring. But what is it that these philosophers are failing to remember and how is such forgetfulness made so easy? In *On Truth and Lying* Nietzsche provides what he takes to be a philological (or genealogical) account of how such conceptions of truth and language have come about and have remained so pervasive, and it is to this account that I shall now turn.

II. Philosophy as Philology: Nietzsche’s Unveiling of Truth’s Forgotten Origins

I had mentioned above that Nietzsche had an undeniable mastery of language, whether it be Greek, Latin, French or his native German tongue. This mastery, of course, owes

⁸ See footnote 6.

much to Nietzsche's philological background and I mention this background here for two reasons. The first is that, in order to show that the philosophical accounts of truth and language discussed above have drastically erred, Nietzsche resorts to a method of genealogical excavation utilizing techniques such as those in etymological and philological approaches to the study of languages. The second reason is that the imagery that Nietzsche uses to describe the origins of language, the "drive for truth" and the relationship between knower and that which is known (or if this is different, truth-seeker and the truth) is laden with the language of literary and linguistic analysis; that is, in order to describe man's relation to reality and man's assessment of that relation, notions such as "interpretation", "translation", "concept-formation" and, of course, "metaphor" are always more prominent than the language of "correspondence" or "representation". As Daniel Breazeale puts it: "When he examined actual cases of knowledge, Nietzsche concluded that the process involved in bridging the gap between subject and object bears a much closer resemblance to the process of metaphor formation than to any kind of 'picturing' or 'mirroring'." ¹⁰

As said in the introduction almost every attempt to give an account of the role that metaphor plays in language presupposes a fixed, literal meaning of our words, upon which the metaphorical is taken to be parasitic. That is, the fixed, literal meaning is always considered to be *logically* (conceptually) prior to any metaphorical use of

⁹ More on this below. Cf. pp. 9-11.

language. Nietzsche, however, views this as fundamentally flawed, precisely because what is here taken to be fundamental – i.e. the fixed, literal meaning which is considered to be the privileged position at which language and reality come into direct contact – is an illusion. What is forgotten, then, according to Nietzsche, is that what is fundamental to language is not a disinterested formation of concepts - disinterested attempts to get language, thought and reality to correlate, one with the other, *a la* the *Tractarian logico-philosopher* - but rather, an active, indeed creative formation of metaphors.

Nietzsche presents this fundamental process of metaphor formation as threefold and it begins at the same level as most explanations of concept formation, i.e. at perception. Man, says Nietzsche, “designates only the relations of things to men, and to express these relations he uses the boldest of metaphors. First, he translates a nerve stimulus into an image! That is the first metaphor. Then, the image must be reshaped into a sound! The second metaphor. And each time there is a complete overleaping of spheres—from one sphere to the center of a totally different, new one” (*UWL* p. 248-9). The first metaphor formation, as far as I can tell, takes place purely at the physiological level. There is a transition – or to keep in line with the etymology of the word “metaphor”, a “carrying over”¹¹ – of the stimulations that are received in the sphere of the nerve stimuli into the sphere in which the image is formulated (presumably the sphere of

¹⁰ Daniel Breazeale, ‘Introduction’, in *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the early 1870’s*, (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1979), xxxiii.

¹¹ Ibid. Breazeale gives the etymology of the Greek word “metaphor” as “to carry over,” “to carry across,” or “to transfer”.

the imagination).

I will be returning to this point in section V below, but right now I will just say that it is unclear just how to take this first metaphor formation, in the sense that it is unclear what active role the human being plays in this kind of nerve stimulation, let alone the active role of “translator.” Nevertheless, this seems to be how Nietzsche is conceiving it, and the main point at this juncture is that the physiological sphere in which the nerve stimulus takes place and the sphere in which the image takes place are utterly distinct, and any translation that takes place could only be a metaphorical rather than a literal one. And in much the same vein the second metaphor formation takes place when a sound is voiced which designates the image which was translated from the nerve stimulus: “What is a word? The portrayal of nerve stimuli in sounds” (*UWL*, p. 248).

There is a third and final metaphor formation and it is when the “word as sound” – which is a metaphor for the image, which, in turn, is a metaphor for the nerve stimulus – becomes a concept:

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 the unequal things (*UWL*, p. 249).

Whereas the “word as sound” is meant to portray only the “unique and entirely individual” image, which is an image of the “unique and entirely individual” nerve

stimulus, the concept is meant to portray or “pick out” that which is similar in all the individual instances, disregarding the dissimilar. It is precisely this “picking out” of that which the individual experiences supposedly have in common that is traditionally taken to be the “literal” interpretation of those experiences. Or rather, traditionally they are taken not to be *interpretations* at all, but rather as instances in which a concept comes into direct contact with reality. However, if we grant that Nietzsche’s story of the origin of language as a continuous process of metaphor formations is correct, then the very activity of concept formation only takes place after a significant amount of interpretive work has transpired. So to claim that the concept is in direct contact with reality – which, on Nietzsche’s schema, the closest thing to direct contact with reality would be the nerve stimulus, from which the concept is the furthest removed – would either be a mistake, an illusion or a lie. Ironically, if we accept Nietzsche’s portrayal (N), and compare his schema of concept formation with that given by Socrates(S):

(N): Nerve stimulus (translation) image (translation) word (translation) concept,

(S): Form (imitation) couch/concept (imitation) artwork,

then those who claim to be speaking the truth according to Nietzsche (i.e. the philosophers and the scientists), are in the same position in relation to the truth as are the artists according to Socrates,¹² that is, as far removed from truth as one could possibly be!

¹² There is, of course, an undeniable resemblance between Nietzsche’s portrayal of the distinction between the artist and the philosophers and scientists in *On Truth and Lying* and the distinction between the Dionysian and the Apollonian in *The Birth of Tragedy* respectively. Below I will attempt to show the connection between *On Truth and Lying* and Nietzsche’s later writings, but I will remain relatively silent

And it is precisely that the philosophers and scientists *do so* resemble the artist which Nietzsche says they have forgotten:

Only by forgetting this primitive world of metaphor can one live with any repose, security, and consistency: only by means of the purification and coagulation of a mass of images which originally streamed from the primal faculty of human imagination like a fiery liquid, only in the invincible faith that *this* sun, *this* window, *this* table is a truth in itself, in short, only by forgetting that he himself is an *artistically creating* subject, does man live with any repose, security, and consistency (*UWL*, p. 252, emphasis in the original).

According to Nietzsche, the philosophers and the scientists have become so entranced by the similarities between the “unique and entirely individual experiences” that they have forgotten that they are dealing with a similarity and are under the illusion that they’re dealing with an equality. Under such an illusion one “now places his behavior under the control of abstractions. He will no longer tolerate being carried away by sudden impressions, by intuitions...he universalizes all these impressions into less colorful, cooler concepts, so that he can entrust the guidance of his life and conduct to them. Everything which distinguishes man from the animals depends upon this ability to volatilize perceptual metaphors in a schema, and thus to dissolve an image into a concept” (*UWL*, p. 250).

This forgetful creation of a conceptual schema is, according to Nietzsche, one of man’s greatest blunders, and yet, it seems to have been inevitable. On the one hand, man as “*rational* being” has erected concepts which are to capture the form which is itself

supposed to be embedded in the “unique and entirely individual experiences,” but these individual experiences are themselves the metaphorical constructs of the artistically creative individual for whom they are experiences: “But in any case it seems to me that ‘the correct perception’—which would mean ‘the adequate expression of an object in the subject’—is a contradictory impossibility. For between two absolutely different spheres, as between subject and object, there is no causality, no correctness” (*UWL*, p. 252).

There is no “correctness” because the subject is utterly distinct from the object, and in being utterly distinct any description of the object by the subject would require a metaphor formation, a “carrying over” from one sphere into an entirely distinct other. That is, any account of “correctness” will always already be wrapped up in the process of concept (i.e. metaphor) formation. One might think here that if man could only step outside himself and get, say, a bird’s eye-view, then he might be able to speak of the “correct perception.” But this would only be another illusion, and it is precisely why Nietzsche considers the notion of a “correct perception” to be a *contradictory* impossibility rather than simply an impossibility, for apart from the impossibility of man’s stepping outside himself to get a bird’s eye-view (whatever this might be), should he do so, he would see that the bird’s eye-view is just that, the *bird’s* perception. Apart from the value-schema that man has *created* (and forgotten that he has done so), all perceptions are of equal value, and, therefore, no value, and should man step outside himself, he would be stepping outside the realm of this schema: “if each of us had a

different kind of sense perception—if we could only perceive things now as a bird, now as a worm, now as a plant, or if one of us saw a stimulus as red, another as blue, while a third even heard the same stimulus as a sound—then no one would speak of such a regularity of nature, rather, nature would be grasped only as a creation which is subjective in the highest degree” (*UWL*, p. 253).

On the other hand, this is precisely why Nietzsche considers the edifice of concepts an inevitable human creation, for if mankind did not erect such a schema, life, he maintains, would be altogether intolerable:

...something is possible in the realm of these schemata which could never be achieved with the vivid first impressions: the construction of a pyramidal order according to castes and degrees, the creation of a new world of laws, privileges, subordinations, and clearly marked boundaries—a new world, one which now confronts that other vivid world of first impressions as more solid, more universal, better known, and more human than the immediately perceived world, and thus as the regulative and imperative world (*UWL*, p. 250).

It is, Nietzsche thinks, largely due to the pleasant, life-preserving consequences for which the edifice of concepts allows that mankind is eager, all-too-eager, to forget its origins (*UWL*, p. 248). In forgetting the origin of language our linguistic practices are seen as comprising a fixed whole for which the edifice of concepts is to provide a justification, a foundation. However, Nietzsche says, “if but for an instant he could escape from the prison walls of this faith, his ‘self-consciousness’ would be immediately destroyed” (*UWL*, p. 252). That is, should one view his concepts, not as mirroring or corresponding to reality or some form embedded therein, but as sharing nothing more than an “*aesthetic*

relation” (ibid.), he would immediately want to step outside of his skin, for he would at once be utterly dissatisfied with his linguistic practices in particular and his life in general, precisely because they *depend on him*, for they are of his making.

So, in *On Truth and Lying*, Nietzsche presents a contrasting story of the origin of language, one in which language is the end result of a process of metaphor formations. This process shows language to be far removed from the reality it purportedly represents, not by distance *per se*, but by being a metaphor for a metaphor of a nerve-stimulus. In forgetting this origin man performs yet another metaphor formation, when the “word as sound” (the second metaphor) is taken to “pick out” the common element, that which is supposedly common to each “unique and entirely individual experience”; such abstractions become concretized as the “edifice of concepts”, a schema by which one conducts and lives one’s life. It is this illusion of stability that allows for the tolerability of life as such.

III. Interpolation: From First to Last

I take the above to be Nietzsche’s conception of language and truth as presented in *On Truth and Lying in an Extra-Moral Sense*. This posthumously published essay was written in 1873 when Nietzsche was still a professor of classical philology at the University of Basel, and just a year after the publication of his first book *The Birth of Tragedy*. It would be interesting, then, to see just how much (if at all) Nietzsche’s views

on these issues evolved throughout his short but extremely prolific authorship which spanned just sixteen years, from 1872-1888.

Perhaps now is the time to say that I think there is good reason to believe that much of Nietzsche's subsequent writings are informed by and often expand and elaborate upon just this conception of language and truth. For instance, in part two of *Beyond Good and Evil* ("The Free-Spirit") we hear Nietzsche mocking the "simplification and falsification" that is man: "...how from the beginning we have contrived to retain our ignorance in order to enjoy an almost inconceivable freedom, lack of scruple and caution, heartiness, and gaiety of life - in order to enjoy life! And only on this now solid, granite foundation of ignorance could knowledge rise so far" (*BGE*, sec. 24). Language, Nietzsche goes on, remains awkward and continues to "talk of opposites where there are only degrees and many subtleties of gradation" (*ibid.*).¹³ As in *On Truth and Lying*, talk of opposites (e.g. truth and falsity) is presented as a created means by which life is made tolerable.

Around the same time as the publication of *Beyond Good and Evil*¹⁴ we have Nietzsche writing in his notebooks: "Against the positivism which halts at phenomena [which claims] 'There are only facts' - I would say: no, facts are just what there aren't,

¹³ See also section 34 and especially 268 of the same text, the latter of which beginning with a recapitulation of the process of concept formation found in *On Truth and Lying*: "What, in the end, is common? Words are acoustical signs for concepts; concepts, however, are more or less definite image signs for often recurring and associated sensations, for groups of sensations...".

¹⁴ Around 1886.

there are only interpretations” (*LNB*, p. 139).¹⁵ Implicit in this denial of facts is Nietzsche’s conception of language as a process of metaphor formation. He is not denying that when people speak of facts they mean what they say, rather, he is denying that facts have any special status over and above interpretations, for as we have already seen, in order for there to be talk of facts, a significant amount of interpretation has already gone on. Perhaps the force of this conception of language and truth reaches its pinnacle when Nietzsche says that the world so ardently and solemnly contemplated by the philosophers and the scientists is “false, i.e., is not a fact but a fictional elaboration and filling out of a meager store of observations; it is ‘in flux’, as something becoming, as a constantly shifting falsity that never gets any nearer to truth, for - there is no ‘truth’” (*LNB*, p. 80). By calling the world “false” Nietzsche is denying the world *as it is conceived of according to the edifice of concepts*, that according to which truth and falsity are determined. That is, if the “true” world is the one characterized by the concretized edifice of concepts (i.e. our language), well, then, says Nietzsche, the world is not *that*. What, then, is the world? Entirely other than the world according to our static, *fixed* language, that is, *in flux*, “false”.

This notion that the world is one of “flux” or becoming (as opposed to being) plays an important role in Nietzsche’s philosophy in general and in *On Truth and Lying* in particular, for our willingness to assume that language can capture the flux or

¹⁵ Further references to *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, R. Bittner ed., K. Sturge, trans. (Cambridge:

becoming of reality is a willingness that Nietzsche is incessantly trying to expose as groundless. Because language is a fixed schema founded upon, or informed by, a metaphysics of essence, any attempt to portray the flux of life by means of language is always already a transference of fluctuation to fixity. I will try to explain this.

In *On Truth and Lying* Nietzsche illustrates this failure of language to capture or represent the becoming of reality by comparing language - our “edifice of concepts” - to Roman Columbaria: “Whereas any intuitive metaphor is individual and unique and therefore always eludes any commentary, the great structure of concepts displays the rigid regularity of a Roman columbarium...in this respect man can probably be admired as a mighty architectural genius who succeeds in building an infinitely complicated conceptual cathedral on foundations that move like flowing water” (*UWL*, p. 251). Columbaria are elaborate storage places for cinerary urns containing the remains of venerated members of the community. The architecture of these columbaria is meant to invoke awe and reverence for the deceased. However, what is contained within the columbaria - and by analogy the “edifice of concepts” - is nothing but ashes, nothing but the remains of what once was living, breathing, becoming.

That becoming cannot be captured in language is a theme that runs through Nietzsche’s writings from first to last. In the summer of 1885, some twelve years after composing *On Truth and Lying*, Nietzsche records in his notebooks a criticism of

philosophy virtually identical to that found in his early essay: “Philosophy in the only way I still allow it to stand...as an attempt somehow to describe Heraclitean becoming and to abbreviate it into signs (so to speak, to *translate* and mummify it into a kind of illusory being)” (*LNB*, p. 26).¹⁶ In *On the Genealogy of Morals*, published in 1887, Nietzsche says that “there is no ‘being’ behind doing, effecting, becoming; ‘the doer’ is merely a fiction added to the deed - the deed is everything” (*GM*: First Essay, Section 13).¹⁷ And in *Twilight of the Idols*, completed in September of 1888, just three months before his mental breakdown in Turin (January 3, 1889), Nietzsche reiterates in aphoristic form his charge in *On Truth and Lying* directed against the philosophers and scientists: “All that philosophers have handled for thousands of years have been concept-mummies; nothing real escaped their grasp alive. When these honorable idolaters [sic] of concepts worship something, they kill it and stuff it; they threaten the life of everything they worship. Death, change, old age, as well as procreation and growth, are to their minds objections - even refutations. Whatever has being does not become; whatever becomes does not have being” (*TI*: “Reason” in Philosophy, Section 1).¹⁸ This diametric

page number.

¹⁶ A bit later in the notebooks (1887) he writes: “In fact *logic* (like geometry and arithmetic) only applies to *fictitious truths that we have created*. Logic is the attempt to understand the real world according to a scheme of being that we have posited, or, more correctly, the attempt to make it formulatable, calculable for us...” (*LNB* 158, italics in original).

¹⁷ All references to *On the Genealogy of Morals* are taken from *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, Walter Kaufmann, trans. and ed., (New York: Modern Library, 2000).

¹⁸ See also section 5 under the same heading of *Twilight of the Idols*: “...We enter a realm of crude fetishism when we summon before consciousness the basic presuppositions of the metaphysics of language, in plain talk, the presuppositions of reason...I am afraid we are not rid of God because we still have faith in grammar.” All references to *Twilight of the Idols* are from *The Portable Nietzsche*, Walter Kaufmann,

opposition between being and becoming is, in *On Truth and Lying*, the opposition between language and reality respectively.

What Nietzsche is calling for, then - what he takes to be the task of the philosopher of the future¹⁹ - is an attempt at getting *beyond* conceiving of reality in terms of being, which consists (at least in large part) in getting *beyond* language as it purports to represent reality in such terms: “What’s needed first is absolute skepticism [sic] towards all received concepts” (*LNB*, p. 13).

“How”, it might be asked, “is one to get *beyond*?” In *On Truth and Lying* one’s striving to get *beyond* the “edifice of concepts” - that “regular and rigid new world [which] is built up for him as a prison fortress²⁰” (*UWL*, p. 254) - takes the form of art and mythmaking. The artist, says Nietzsche, “constantly confuses the categories and cells of the concepts by presenting new transferences, metaphors, and metonyms; constantly showing the desire to shape the existing world of the wide-awake person to be variegatedly irregular and disinterestedly incoherent, exciting and eternally new, as is the world of dreams... That enormous structure of beams and boards of the concepts, to which the poor man clings for dear life, is for the liberated intellect just a scaffolding and plaything for his boldest artifices” (*UWL*, p. 254-5). This view of language as a “plaything” of the artist, and of the artist - and more specifically, the poet - as genius, as

trans. and ed. (New York: Viking, 1982).

¹⁹ The subtitle to *Beyond Good and Evil* is “Prelude to a Philosophy of the Future”. Getting beyond good and evil is an aspect of getting beyond language, or at least a language that is founded upon a metaphysics of essences.

master-confuse(r) of categories and liberator from hierarchical conceptual schemes has had a profound impact upon many (post-)modern artists, poets and theorists. However, my main concern at this juncture is not whether this influence has been for good or ill (I'm sure it is a little or a lot of both). Rather, I think it is of the utmost importance to recognize how self-reflective Nietzsche is about his criticisms of language, its limitations and his role as author; that is, Nietzsche does not consider himself, *his* language, to be exempt from these very criticisms.²¹ In *Twilight of the Idols* - amidst his effort of “*sounding out idols*”, that is, revealing commonly held “ideals” to be “hollow”²² - Nietzsche pauses, as if to remind not only his readers but himself as well that, should anyone take what he has to say dogmatically, one would only be erecting yet another hollow idol, another columbarium: “We no longer esteem ourselves sufficiently when we communicate ourselves. Our true experiences are not at all garrulous. They could not communicate themselves even if they tried. That is because they lack the right word.

²⁰ I will return to Nietzsche's conception of language as a “prison fortress” below.

²¹ In his *Deconstruction: Theory and Practice* (2002), Christopher Norris concurs when he says “Nietzsche...permits his reader no such comforting assurance that the ‘truth’ of his writing is there to be discovered by a careful passage from signifier to signified. To interpret him thus is to fall once again into the great Platonic illusion of a realm of purely intelligible meaning obscured by the material artifice of language” (p. 66). However, Norris provides no contextual evidence that Nietzsche is so self-aware of his un-authoritative authorship. Therefore, I take this paragraph to be an attempt to make good Norris' claim and others like it.

²² In his preface to *Twilight of the Idols or, How One Philosophizes with a Hammer*, Walter Kaufmann does a great service in reminding Nietzsche's readers that “philosophizing with a hammer” is the art of hearing the hollowness of the “idols” (i.e. false ideals or false gods) when they are “touched with a hammer as with a tuning fork” (*PN*, p. 464). See also Nietzsche's preface to *Ecce Homo* where he says: “The last thing *I* should promise would be to ‘improve’ mankind. No new idols are erected by me...*Overthrowing idols* (my word for “ideals”) - that comes closer to being part of my craft” (*BWN*, 673-4). These two self-descriptions of Nietzsche's enterprise could equally well characterize Nietzsche's efforts in *On Truth and Lying*, where he is revealing “idols” to be hollow as roman columbaria.

Whatever we have words for, that we have already got beyond. In all talk there is a grain of contempt... With language the speaker immediately vulgarizes himself. Out of a morality for deaf-mutes and other philosophers” (*TI*, p. 530-1).²³ In using language to communicate ourselves and our experiences we are like Gorgons standing upon the bank of a flowing stream; as soon as we dip our hands in and pull something out we have at once fossilized it and thereby falsified it. If our goal is to communicate our true selves - which are selves of “becoming” - and our true experiences - which, in the terms of *On Truth and Lying*, are “unique and entirely individual” - then to do so in a language of essences, a language of “being” (that is, according to Nietzsche, *our* language) is always already a failure to communicate them.

IV. Language as Prison

In the preceding section I have attempted to present textual evidence that shows *On Truth and Lying* to be, not just an early, isolated and unsophisticated attempt on Nietzsche’s part to criticize and separate himself from his philosophical ancestors. Rather, as I hope to have shown, in this essay Nietzsche confronts problems and presents major themes that run through his entire corpus, most importantly: the origin of language as a process of metaphor formations; the diametric opposition between our language of being and the

²³ Compare with the last aphorism (sec. 296) of *Beyond Good and Evil*, just before Nietzsche breaks into verse: “What things do we copy, writing and painting... what are the only things we are able to paint? Alas, always only what is on the verge of withering and losing its fragrance!” (*BGE*, p. 236). The page numbers refer to *The Portable Nietzsche*, Walter Kaufmann, trans. and ed. (New York: Viking, 1982).

becoming of reality and, therefore, the failure of language to capture reality and the call to get *beyond* such limitations. Indeed, in his recent analysis of *Beyond Good and Evil*, Douglas Burnham concurs when he says that “this problem of language reiterates Nietzsche’s general methodological problem: how to communicate about the world as will to power when ordinary and even philosophical language is saturated in moral evaluations that are ultimately falsifications of just that world?” (RN, p. 205).²⁴ Burnham continues by saying that for Nietzsche “philosophical thought itself is *by virtue of its basic constitution* unable to penetrate the depths of existence” (RN, p. 224). Unable, that is, because thought’s basic constitution is linguistic. Language, as Nietzsche conceives it, prevents such penetration as prison walls prevent access to the freedom - the becoming - that beckons and mocks from beyond them.²⁵

If I am correct in my presentation of Nietzsche, what manifests itself in his writings is a form of linguistic skepticism which, to borrow the words of Charles Altieri, conceives of language as “somehow a separate structuring force with its own contents” (Altieri, pp. 1398-9). And as he goes on to say, “once words and things are seen as constituting separate, self-enclosed realms, one can only avoid skepticism [sic.] by

²⁴ When he says this Burnham is discussing section 268 of *Beyond Good and Evil* which begins thus: “What, in the end, is common? Words are acoustical signs for concepts; concepts, however, are more or less definite image signs for often recurring and associated sensations, for groups of sensations...” (BGE, p. 216). This is virtually the same story as the one told in *On Truth and Lying*. That is, as late as BGE the relation between nerve stimulus (here, “sensation”), “image” and word, as it is portrayed in *On Truth and Lying*, is simply taken for granted. Further references to Burnham Douglas, *Reading Nietzsche: An Analysis of Beyond Good and Evil*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007) will be indicated by RN in parentheses followed by the page number.

²⁵ “Prison walls” is, again, one of Nietzsche’s descriptions of language (UWL, p. 252), not mine.

positing some metaphysical entity or ‘origin,’ an absolute mind, a synthetic *a priori*, logical simples, or an idea of forms or essences - to explain how the two come together” (ibid., p. 1409). Now, Nietzsche’s criticisms are not simply to the effect that there are no such metaphysical entities (even though he is quite adamant that there are not). He is also trying to show that the assumption that, if word and world are to come together, there *must* be, and therefore are, such entities is just that, an *assumption*, an assumption that Nietzsche finds manifest in the very language that we speak.

It is my contention, however, that Nietzsche’s conception of the origin of language - out of which grows his linguistic skepticism - is not bereft of its own metaphysical assumptions. I will try to show that his conception of the origin of language is a variation upon an already prevalent philosophical conception of language, one that assumes a certain metaphysical gap between language and reality. Nietzsche’s continuous criticisms of the failure of language are due, not to surveying language at work and finding it wanting, but rather to already having what I will call an *imagistic* conception of language and, I want to say, a skewed one at that. So, I want now to return to *On Truth and Lying*²⁶ so as to call that conception of the origin of language into question.

²⁶ Though if what I have presented in this essay is correct, we have, in a sense, never really left it.

V. Language as Prison?: The Origin of Nietzsche's Linguistic Skepticism

In section II above I expressed some reservations concerning the first crossing over of spheres in Nietzsche's description of the tripartite process of metaphor-formations, the process of translating a nerve-stimulus into an image. I said there that it is not entirely clear what role the individual is playing in the process of nerve-stimuli being converted into mental images, and that it is even less clear that this conversion resembles the process of translation or metaphor formation. Moreover, it is questionable whether Nietzsche is describing a process that actually takes place, or whether he is betraying an uncritical inheritance of a certain *imagistic* philosophical account of visual perception in particular, and sensation in general.

I will only hint at it here, but there is a significant tradition within the history of philosophy in which images play an important intermediary role between word and world.²⁷ In his analysis of Kant's distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments J. Alberto Coffa describes succinctly what I mean by the "imagistic tradition":

On this way of looking at things, the basic semantic notion is that of "representations" (*Vorstellungen*) construed as "modifications of the mind" that "belong to inner sense", as mental states designed to represent something. A long tradition, canonized in the *Logique de Port Royal*, had declared ideas or representations the most important subject of logic, since "we can have knowledge of what is outside us only through the mediation of ideas in us"...In Leibniz's words, human souls "perceive what passes

²⁷ For a fuller account of the history of this tradition see Father Garth L. Hallett's *Language and Truth* (Yale University Press: New Haven and London, 1988), particularly the first two chapters.

without them by what passes within them”...indeed, “the nature of the monad” is “to represent” (*The Semantic Tradition from Kant to Carnap*, p. 9).

So, for instance, in the *Stromata* Clement of Alexandria says that “in language three things should be distinguished: first of all names, that are essentially symbols of concepts and, consequently, of objects. Second, concepts, which are images and impressions of objects... Third, objects, which impress the concepts in our minds.”²⁸ Here Clement only discusses names, but the ordering of the relation is identical to that of Nietzsche’s:

(N): Nerve stimuli - images are metaphors for stimuli - words are metaphors for images,

(C) Objects - concepts are images for objects - names are symbols for concepts.

John Locke presents a similar picture in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* when he says that “so far as words are of use and signification, so far is there a constant connection [sic.] between the sound and the idea, and a designation that the one [sound] *stands for* the other [idea]; without which application of them, they are nothing but so much insignificant noise” (*ECHU*, bk. 3, ch. 2, n. 7; my emphasis). It is only by virtue of our words being in some way “the signs of those ideas”²⁹ that intelligible speech is to be distinguishable from mere insignificant sound.

Now, I am not here making the claim that Nietzsche is, unbeknownst to himself, a full-fledged member of this imagistic tradition; to do so would require at the very least an awkward subversion of much of his writings. Another, and perhaps more important,

²⁸ Quoted by Hallett in his *Language and Truth* (1988), p. 6.

reason that I am refraining from securing Nietzsche a place in this tradition is because, when Nietzsche talks about the relation between nerve-stimuli and images, and, in turn, the relation between these images and words, he is talking about them, not in terms of impressions, significations, sense-data or representations *per se*, but in terms of metaphors, and this marks an important distinction between Nietzsche and the imagistic tradition, for in characterizing the entire process as one of metaphor formation, Nietzsche is characterizing it as an entirely creative process. However, if my above presentation of Nietzsche has been faithful to his texts, then his characteristically imagistic account of the origin of language is, perhaps, an inherited variation that has gone unchecked. That is, Nietzsche is still portraying words as metaphors *for* images, and it is here that remnants of the imagistic account may be seen to have been passed on, even if unnoticed. Thus, I am claiming that Nietzsche assumes (and, as I have shown, reiterates) a picture of our relation to the world - and the role that language plays in that relation - that presupposes a gap between language and reality, that this gap is what gives rise to Nietzsche's linguistic skepticism and that this picture bares a striking resemblance to various imagistic theories.

My goal here is not to *fill* the gap between language and reality (or in Nietzschean terms, to show that a successful, that is, literal "carrying over" between spheres can be made); rather, it is to call into question the very notion of a gap, the very notion that in dealing with reality and language we are dealing with distinct spheres. What is

²⁹ Ibid., bk. 2, ch. 22, n. 9.

interesting is that portraying reality and language as distinct spheres does not seem to be peculiar to Nietzsche, and this is why I have pointed to certain similarities between Nietzsche's picture of language's relation to reality and various *imagistic* ways of characterizing that relation. For as can be seen from just the two imagistic examples above, language is already portrayed as being somewhat removed from reality in being symbolic of mental images or designations of ideas; that these images and ideas are images and ideas *of* reality is something that is simply taken as given. This, I should make clear, is not meant to give rise to skepticism about whether our images and ideas are of reality; it is, rather, to call attention to the assumed *generality* of the role of language, that *all* of our words are symbols or designations of (or metaphors for) images or ideas. Ludwig Wittgenstein, we may recall, devoted a hearty portion of his intellectual life to disrupting this very notion, that language always functions in one way, always serves the same purpose.³⁰

One of the things that manifests itself in such generalities, says Wittgenstein, is that our relation to reality is only thought of upon the model of spectator-and-spectacle, and that what we are supposed to try to do with language according to this model is capture, hook up with, map onto, represent that reality.³¹ Nietzsche's conception of the origin of language as a threefold process of metaphor formations is different only in that any attempt at capturing, hooking onto, representing, or what have you, is always already

³⁰ See *Philosophical Investigations*, sec. 304.

a failed attempt. The emphasis that Wittgenstein places on particular practices (his hankering for the ordinary) is an attempt to displace the general application of this spectator-and-spectacle model as *the* characterization of our relation to reality and the role language plays in that relation.

This displacement is at work in Wittgenstein's discussions of the concept of pain:

Now someone tells me that *he* knows what pain is only from his own case!-- Suppose everyone had a box with something in it: we call it a "beetle". No one can look into anyone else's box, and everyone says he knows what a beetle is only by looking at *his* beetle.—Here it would be quite possible for everyone to have something different in his box. One might even imagine such a thing constantly changing.—But suppose the word "beetle" had a use in these people's language?—If so it would not be used as the name of a thing. The thing in the box has no place in the language-game at all; not even as a *something*: for the box might even be empty.—No, one can 'divide through' by the thing in the box; it cancels out, whatever it is. That is to say: if we construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of 'object and designation' the object drops out of consideration as irrelevant (*PI*, sec. 293).³²

After reading this passage we can imagine someone asking: "If someone tells me that he has a beetle in his box, a box that only he can look into, why then can't the word 'beetle' be used as a name?" I take it that it's because, *as of yet*, he has not provided us with any information that would allow us to distinguish between the word "beetle" as being used to refer to something constant, something constantly changing or, quite frankly, nothing at all. "But surely," one might retort, "he is plenty able to provide that

³¹ See also sections 12-13 of Heidegger's *Being and Time*.

³² Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G.E.M. Anscombe, trans. (New York: Macmillan, 1958), section, 293. Hereafter referred to in the text by *PI* in parentheses followed by section numbers.

information for *himself*.” However, it is unclear why he has not made (or, it seems, cannot make) that information publicly available to us as well. That is, if he cannot provide us with any information that would allow us to determine that he is using the word “beetle” to refer to *x* as opposed to *y* or vice versa, or nothing as opposed to either *x* or *y*, then, *as of yet* we have no way of determining that *he* is in possession of such information and, therefore, no way of determining that *he* is, in fact, making such distinctions. And if he is not making these distinctions, then, clearly he is not using the word “beetle” as a name. Thus, it follows that those who “construe the grammar of the expression of sensation on the model of ‘object and designation’”, those who take words like “pain” to be referring to private, inner experiences of which only they can have access, have not provided any indication that they are distinguishing between something constant, something constantly changing or nothing at all, and, therefore, have not indicated that they are using the word “pain” to refer at all.³³

Wittgenstein’s discussions on how we are to understanding the meaning of the concept “pain” are an attempt on his part to displace our unreflective application of the model of spectator-and-spectacle (the model of “object and designation”), so that we may focus our attention on the various ways that we respond to pain and to others in pain, which, I take it, could not be more different than responding to someone who says he has

³³ There have, of course been other (and possibly opposing) readings of this difficult passage than the one I have presented here. For a clear discussion of various readings of Wittgenstein’s writings on the notion of “private language” (and some very original commentary) see Stephen Mulhall’s *Wittgenstein’s Private Language: Grammar, Nonsense and Imagination in ‘Philosophical Investigations, SS. 243-315* (2007).

something in a box (that is, the concept “pain” only looks like a name for something in a box to which only the owner has access when we are unreflectively applying the model of “object and designation”).³⁴ It should be noted also that Wittgenstein is not attempting to reduce pain (and, therefore, our use of the concept “pain”) to pain behavior. He is, however, stressing the important role that is played by behavior expressive of pain in our understanding of the concept “pain”; that is, for instance, that we should not simply take it as a matter of course that when we are in pain and want to keep this from others, it is then that we are performing an act of *concealment*, and, perhaps more importantly, that this is often very difficult, if not impossible, to do.³⁵

It might not be too far off to characterize Wittgenstein’s discussion of pain as providing an alternative *genealogy* of the concept “pain”, one that does not generalize our relation to the world upon the model of spectator-and-spectacle. Upon this genealogical account the word “pain” is not something that is meant to represent some object in the world, but rather is that by which we come to express ourselves within it. This comes out when Wittgenstein offers one possible answer to the question of how the connection between name and the thing named is set up. “This question,” he says, “is the same as:

Hereafter referred to as *WPL*.

³⁴ To say this in a slightly different way, using a variation on one of Wittgenstein’s remarks pertaining to the concept “soul”: My attitude towards him is an attitude towards someone in pain. I am not of the *opinion* that he has a pain in the way that someone has something in a box. See *Philosophical Investigations*, p. 178, part II, sec. iv.

³⁵ I have been unable to locate exactly where I first came across this point about the *concealment* of pain, whether it is one that Wittgenstein makes explicitly or whether it is a point drawn out by one of his many helpful commentators on Wittgenstein’s discussion of pain (I am thinking particularly here of David Cockburn, in his *Other Human Beings* (1990) and his *An Introduction to the Philosophy of Mind* (2001)).

how does a human being learn the meaning of the names of sensations?--of the word "pain" for example. Here is one possibility: words are connected with the primitive, the natural, expressions of the sensation and used in their place. A child has hurt himself and he cries; and then adults talk to him and teach him exclamations and, later, sentences. They teach the child new pain-behavior./ "So you are saying that the word 'pain' really means crying?"--On the contrary: the verbal expression of pain replaces crying and does not describe it (*PI*, sec. 244). The connection being made here is not between a word and some internal, non-linguistic entity; rather, verbal expressions of pain are taught variations of primitive, natural expressions of sensations. Indeed, because the connection being made is not between a word and some internal, non-linguistic entity, but between outer natural expressions of sensations and outer, verbal expressions, the connection is not between inner and outer at all, but, as Stephen Mulhall puts it, between the old and the new (*WPL*, p. 29). That is, there is no "carrying over" because there is, *as of yet*, no dichotomy of spheres.

So, how does this all connect up with my discussion of Nietzsche? I said above that Nietzsche's account of language as a threefold process of metaphor formation presupposes a gulf between language and reality and that what manifests itself in this account is that Nietzsche is only thinking of our relation to reality in terms of a model of spectator-and-spectacle. I have introduced Wittgenstein's discussions of pain in order to

show that the general application of this model is simply unwarranted, that it fails to do justice to the various ways in which we actually do relate to reality and the role that language plays in those relations. If I am correct, then it is not language that comes up short, but Nietzsche's account of it. Without his assumption that there *is* a gap between language and reality it is unclear just how language fails, just how language is unable to capture the becoming that is life, the flux that is birth-maturation-decrepitude-death. Indeed, according to Wittgenstein's discussions language is *an aspect of* the flux that is life. If Nietzsche still claims language to be a vulgarizing of life, then it is entirely unclear what flux he is claiming language fails to capture, that is, it's unclear what Nietzsche is claiming language *can't* do. It then becomes an ever more pressing question of just which reality is the fiction, ours or Nietzsche's.

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