

## OVERCOMING THE CONFLICT OF EVOLUTIONARY AND NATURALIZED EPISTEMOLOGY IN NIETZSCHE

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*Abstract: There is a difficulty in understanding Nietzsche's epistemology. It is generally accepted that he endorses the naturalized epistemological view that knowledge should be closely connected to the sciences. He also holds the evolutionary epistemological position that knowledge has developed exclusively to benefit human survival. Nietzsche's evolutionary epistemology, however, appears to imply a debunking argument about the truth of our beliefs that seems to undermine his commitment to a naturalized epistemology. This paper argues that Nietzsche's evolutionary epistemology does not, in fact, undermine his naturalized epistemology.*

There is a difficulty in understanding Nietzsche's epistemology. It is generally accepted that he endorses the naturalized epistemological view that knowledge should be closely connected to the sciences. Knowing the world requires us to "translate man back into nature" in part by appeal to "the discipline of science" (BGE 230, cf. GS 109).<sup>1</sup> He also holds the evolutionary epistemological position that knowledge has developed exclusively to benefit human survival. He remarks, "All our *organs and senses of knowledge* are developed only with a view to conditions of preservation and growth" (KSA 12:9[38], cf. 13:14[122], 11:36[19]; TL; GS 110). Nietzsche's evolutionary epistemology, however, appears to imply a debunking argument about the truth of our beliefs that undermines a naturalized conception of epistemology. He remarks, "[A] belief, however necessary it may be for the preservation of a species, has nothing to do with truth" (KSA 12:7[63], cf. 13:14[122]). Elsewhere he asks, "How is truth proved? By the feeling of enhanced power—by utility—by indispensability—in short by advantages. . . . But that is a prejudice: a sign that truth is not involved at all—" (KSA 13:15[58]).<sup>2</sup> It seems that, if a belief benefits us, it is actually *not true*.<sup>3</sup> Since Nietzsche gives no indication that this skepticism does not extend

to scientific beliefs, we are left to wonder whether it is reasonable for him to embrace a naturalized epistemology.

This paper explores the extent to which Nietzsche's evolutionary epistemology undermines his naturalized epistemology. I first briefly lay out how we might understand Nietzsche's naturalism. Afterward I develop his evolutionary debunking argument and examine a primary reason he gives for thinking that it might call into question beliefs supported by the sciences. This reason, I submit, does not imply a rejection of naturalized epistemology. I then suggest that Nietzsche can resist the self-undermining consequences of his own debunking argument by appeal to *scientific constructivism*, roughly the radical thesis that all facts are socially constructed. I close by commenting on how Nietzsche can still endorse an evolutionary debunking argument that does genuinely interesting philosophical work.

## I

Nietzsche endorses the naturalist position that philosophical explanations aim to produce knowledge of the world and that such explanations should be closely associated with the sciences. There are different ways to understand this association. It could be the case that, for Nietzsche, philosophical explanations should be justified by the results of scientific inquiry or derived by methods that model scientific practice.<sup>4</sup> For example, philosophical explanations might attempt to understand phenomena by appeal to causal relations. It could also be that Nietzsche believes that, while many philosophical explanations should be continuous with scientific results or methods, understanding human activity is best done within a normative rather than scientific framework.<sup>5</sup> Human activity is typically guided by reasons rather than causes. These readings of Nietzsche's naturalism maintain that naturalistic explanations are scientific explanations and that a scientific explanation is one sanctioned by the accepted sciences of the day. Another view is that Nietzsche adopts only the scientific principle that we should avoid justifying beliefs by appeal to anything beyond the possibility of experience.<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche asks, "When will all these shadows of god no longer darken us? When will we have completely de-deified nature? When may we begin to *naturalize* humanity with a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature?" (GS 109). In addition to scientific explanations, it could be that genealogical, historical, or artful explanations "de-deify" nature. Of course, Nietzsche's view of what, in particular, informs a naturalized epistemology is not at issue here. It is important simply to point out that Nietzsche thinks science—the "wisdom of this world" (A 47)—should support our knowledge claims.

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## II

Nietzsche also subscribes to the evolutionary epistemological position that our cognitive apparatus has evolved to register only those features of the world that aid our survival. Evolutionary forces make utility the central explanatory feature of our beliefs. Assuming facts make propositions true, which Nietzsche appears to accept,<sup>7</sup> his claim that a belief “necessary” for the “preservation of the species” has “nothing to do with truth” indicates that the pragmatic factors responsible for our beliefs are divorced from *facts* about the world.<sup>8</sup> That is, there is no *alethic explanation* of our beliefs, where the explanation for the belief that *p* is alethic just in case the fact that *p* explains that belief.<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche’s evolutionary debunking argument can then be reconstructed as follows:

1. If the ultimate explanation is the belief that *p* is not alethic, then it is unlikely that *p* is true.
2. The ultimate explanation is that the belief that *p* is not alethic.
3. So, it is unlikely that *p* is true.

The first premise reflects a plausible constraint on truth. If there indeed is a separation between a belief’s content and the factors that lead to the belief, then it could only be by extreme coincidence if the belief turned out to be correct. The second premise claims there is such a separation. Now, one might reasonably think useful beliefs are useful because they *are* true. But Nietzsche apparently resists this: “[U]tility,” he says, is “a sign that truth is not involved at all” (KSA 13:15[58]). The key issue to examine is how he justifies this controversial claim, especially with respect to beliefs supported by the sciences.

## III

The best reason Nietzsche provides for thinking the ultimate explanation for our scientific beliefs is not alethic is that knowledge claims necessarily *falsify* the world.<sup>10</sup> He believes our mode of cognition has evolved wholly in relation to what is advantageous and advantageous representations simplify the world, such that “the entire apparatus for knowledge is an apparatus for abstraction and simplification” (KSA 11:26[61]). This is important because Nietzsche often equates simplification with falsification.<sup>11</sup> For example, he writes:

The spirit’s power to appropriate the foreign stands revealed in its inclination to assimilate the new to the old, to *simplify* the manifold . . . —just as it involuntarily emphasizes certain features and lines in

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what is foreign, . . . retouching and *falsifying* the whole to suit itself (BGE 230, emphasis added).<sup>12</sup>

The point extends to scientific discourse: “The best science [die beste Wissenschaft] seeks most to keep us in this *simplified*, . . . suitably falsified world” (BGE 24, translation modified). Nietzsche’s reasoning is likely that something simplified is *inexact*, and something inexact is *not literally true*.<sup>13</sup> Thus, simplifications are falsifications.

Nietzsche appears to think knowledge claims falsify because cognitive representation is ubiquitously inexact. On his account, cognitive representation is inexact because representational consciousness is a product of the need to communicate using concepts that simplify the world by generalizing over particulars (see GS 354). Other features of representational consciousness function similarly. For instance, logical and mathematical syntax render particulars equal and identical.<sup>14</sup> These considerations lead Nietzsche to conclude that “all becoming conscious involves a vast and thorough corruption, falsification, superficialization, and generalization” (GS 354).

On Nietzsche’s view, the advantageous nature of simplifying perceptual information into a manageable system is the ultimate cause of our beliefs, including our scientific beliefs. It then seems tremendously unlikely that conscious representations pick out facts about the world. Our faculties have developed to cope with the indefinite complexity of experience regardless of how the world might truly be. Falsification is a matter of evolutionary necessity. Of course, science can compensate for some of our representational limitations through devices such as telescopes, microscopes, and the like, but these machines can only enhance our particular mode of cognition, which is, for Nietzsche, ubiquitously simplifying.

#### IV

One might conclude that Nietzsche’s evolutionary view of representational consciousness is incompatible with truth. There are certainly commentators who argue that Nietzsche rejects the existence of truth.<sup>15</sup> My view is that, for Nietzsche, truth is a property of simplified representations. In a striking notebook entry, he writes, “*Truth is the kind of error without which a particular kind of living creature could not live*” (KSA 11:34[253], see also TL; GS 265). The idea that truth is a “*kind*” of falsification suggests truth is a certain *manner* in which a claim is false. On Nietzsche’s account, truths are a certain kind of inexact representation.

Of course, statements are often thought to be true or false, *full stop*, not both at the same time. Yet, Nietzsche asks,

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[W]hat forces us at all to suppose that there is an essential opposition of “true” and “false”? Is it not sufficient to assume degrees of apparentness and, as it were, lighter and darker shadows and shades of appearance—different “values,” to use the language of painters? (BGE 34)

These questions are clearly rhetorical. They indicate that, for Nietzsche, truth indeed comes in “degrees” or “shades.” This means that truth is *approximate*.<sup>16</sup> A representation is approximately true to the extent that what it describes is similar to the target described. Our interests are necessary for specifying this relation of similarity. Assessing the accuracy of approximate representations is like assessing the accuracy of models, such as roadmaps, in the sense that our interests are crucial for determining the parameters that constitute representational success. The truth conditions of approximate representations can be determinate only in relation to our interests. Evaluating those conditions requires specifying which interests are relevant and in what respects. For Nietzsche, a representation can be true to its target only in approximations indexed to our concerns.<sup>17</sup>

Nietzsche’s view that truth is approximate is consistent with his position that knowledge claims necessarily falsify. An *inexact* representation can also be *accurate* if it falls within the parameters that determine representational success. Consider the statement that Erin is six feet tall.<sup>18</sup> No one is six feet tall *exactly*. The length of our backbones fluctuates throughout the day. Of course, we could specify a particular time to measure Erin’s height, but this is an idealization that requires idealizing further variables, such as posture, how much skin-cell surface to include, and so forth. Nonetheless, the *inexact* statement that Erin is six feet tall is an *accurate* representation if the discrepancy between the measure of Erin’s being six feet tall and any measure that includes negligible attributes falls inside the boundaries that constitute representational success. In this sense, literally false statements can be approximately true.

So, Nietzsche holds that knowledge claims falsify because they are inexact and that truth is possible in an approximate sense. Importantly, he thinks accurate approximate representations will be those delivered by the sciences. “All evidence of truth comes only from the senses” (BGE 134), he remarks, and “we possess science nowadays precisely to the extent that we decided to *accept* the evidence of the senses” (TI “Reason” 3). Hence, the justification for the evolutionary debunking argument on offer, the idea that the explanation of our scientific beliefs fails to be alethic because knowledge claims necessarily falsify, does not undermine Nietzsche’s ability to embrace a naturalized epistemology.

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## V

A worry remains. It is one thing to say that truth is *possible* despite systematic falsification, but it is quite another to say that conscious representations actually represent facts. What evidence do we have for thinking that, on Nietzsche's account, scientific beliefs have an alethic explanation? Without such evidence, it seems a naturalized epistemology is doomed. I suggest the evidence is a result of Nietzsche's commitment to scientific constructivism, specifically the thesis that all facts that are in principle graspable are socially constructed.<sup>19</sup> If Nietzsche were committed to a constructivist conception of science, there would be strong reason to think accurate approximate representations are explained by facts. Having true scientific beliefs would be largely a matter of constructing facts.

Nietzsche regularly mentions facts,<sup>20</sup> and, although he never explicitly discusses what a fact is, some passages provide useful hints. For instance, in contrast to philosophers who assume there are "*unalterable* facts of mankind," he asserts "everything has become: there are *no eternal facts*, just as there are no absolute truths" (HH I: 2). Facts do not obtain without change over time, presumably because facts depend on our interpretations, which are indexed to developing needs, interests, and values.<sup>21</sup> Now, facts might depend on our interpretations in the sense that they are obtaining states of affairs that require interpretation to be intelligible as facts. As one distinguished commentator explains, for Nietzsche "There are 'facts' only in the context of interpretations which endow our experiences with whatever 'meaning' they have."<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche does claim that "*a meaning must always be projected*" before there can be "facts" (KSA 12: 2[149]). Yet he seems to embrace a stronger position:

There are no "facts-in-themselves," for *a meaning must always be projected into them before they can be "facts."*<sup>[23]</sup> The question "what is that?" is an *establishment of meaning* from some other viewpoint. The "*essence*," the "*essential nature*," is something perspectival (KSA 12:2[149]).

A fact in itself is a fact in principle inaccessible by any method available to our mode of cognition. Nietzsche suggests facts in themselves do not exist because facthood depends on the identities of objects established through meaningful interpretation. We must determine "*what*" something is, or determine its "perspectival" "*essential nature*," for there to be facts. It then appears that a fact is just an object instantiating a property. On this view of facts, scientific constructivism is implied by *object constructivism*, the thesis that the identities of all objects that are in principle graspable are socially constructed. If object *o* has property F by virtue of social construction, then the fact that *o* has F is by virtue

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of social construction. So, if Nietzsche embraces object constructivism, then he is most likely to embrace scientific constructivism.<sup>24</sup>

Nietzsche endorses object constructivism. He remarks, for example, “[I]t is enough to create new names and valuations . . . to create new ‘things’” (GS 58).<sup>25</sup> “Thing” appears scare-quoted because Nietzsche holds the unorthodox view that something’s being an object depends on our activities. Objecthood depends on our activities because “[a] ‘thing’ is the sum of its effects, synthetically united by a concept” (KSA 13:14[98]).<sup>26</sup> The idea of synthetic unity by a concept clearly comes from Kant. For Kant, we are passively in contact with an undifferentiated sensory manifold, and unifying sense impressions to represent objects occurs by virtue of the application of an innate system of nonempirical concepts. Nietzsche agrees with Kant that concepts organize incoming sense data, but, unlike Kant, he seems to believe all concepts derive from the empirical world in relation to our contingent needs, interests, and values (see, for example, KSA 12:9[98]). For Nietzsche concepts organize “effects,” or simply *properties*,<sup>27</sup> and such organization occurs only in relation to our concerns: “A thing = its qualities; but these equal everything which *matters* to us about that thing; a unity under which we collect the relations that *may be of some account* to us” (KSA 12:2[77]). Objects are then constructed by creating concepts that unify groups of properties in relation to our interests.<sup>28</sup>

The following example can help illuminate Nietzsche’s object constructivism and how it implies scientific constructivism. The concept <planet> has been newly modified to refer only to an object that orbits our sun, remains nearly round, and does not have any bodies of comparable size other than its own satellites under its gravitational influence. Our interpretation of <planet> groups together these features and, in doing so, determines the application conditions of the property of being a planet. Application conditions are conditions that apply to our concepts that predicate properties, and identity conditions are conditions that govern the objects (if any) to which those concepts refer.<sup>29</sup> For Nietzsche, application conditions fix the conditions of identity for whatever satisfies them. The identities of objects such as planets depend on our descriptions because, when we fashion <planet>, we determine the application conditions of the property of being a planet. When we decide on these conditions, we also establish facts about which objects are and are not planets. Such facts do not exist independently of our actions. For Nietzsche, there is no ontologically significant difference between planets and other objects of experience. So, presumably, a similar argument can be made for any other object of experience. “*The best science* [die beste Wissenschaft],” Nietzsche explains, delivers a world “*suitably constructed*” (BGE 24, emphasis added, translation modified).<sup>30</sup>

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Accurate approximate representations are, therefore, likely to be explained by facts because we play an essential role in constructing facts. On Nietzsche's view, constructing facts is critical for helping us navigate our environment, since "we can comprehend only a world that we ourselves have made" (KSA 11:25[470], cf. GS 301). Our particular mode of cognition may be a contingent development of evolutionary forces, but this need not imply that our representations are divorced from facts about the world.

Nietzsche's view that true beliefs likely track facts because we help construct facts is neither circular nor question begging. There are constraints on constructing facts, most importantly sensory information.<sup>31</sup> Since sense data are not arbitrary and should not be ignored when organizing the world into objects in one way rather than another, accurate approximate representations are not explained by facts *merely* because we play a role in constructing facts. So Nietzsche's view is not circular. His position is also not question begging. In a famous passage, he says "[T]here is *only* a perspective seeing, *only* a perspective 'knowing'" (GM III: 12). For Nietzsche, we cannot represent something fully independent of our representations of it, such as Kantian things in themselves. Representations can be compared only to other representations. The accuracy of a representation can then be judged only relative to other representations, which are indexed to differently specified sets of concerns. Since there are an infinite number of such sets, the view that we aid in constituting facts does not assume all approximate representations will be accurate. Once facts are constructed, we can succeed or fail to represent them accurately.

## VI

I have argued that the debunking argument that seems to be a consequence of Nietzsche's evolutionary epistemology does not provide sufficient reason to reject a naturalized conception of epistemology. What are we to make of the two passages quoted at the outset that suggest Nietzsche embraces the evolutionary debunking argument? The first is as follows:

[A] belief, however necessary it may be for the preservation of a species, has nothing to do with truth, one knows that from the fact that, e.g., we have to believe in time, space, and motion, without feeling compelled to grant them absolute reality (KSA 12:7[63]).

Beliefs formed through evolutionary means have "nothing to do with truth" only if truth requires some "absolute reality," which, for Nietzsche, is a fully mind-independent world. In this passage, Nietzsche is denying a Kantian metaphysical-correspondence theory of truth, which errone-

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ously assumes that we can represent something completely independent of our representations of it.<sup>32</sup> A rejection of this theory of truth implies that advantageous beliefs can be true.

The second passage that appears to endorse the evolutionary debunking argument is this:

How is truth proved? By the feeling of enhanced power—by utility—by indispensability—in short by advantages. . . . But that is a prejudice: a sign that truth is not involved at all—(KSA 13:15[58]).

But notice the lines immediately preceding it:

The advantages that one anticipated from truth were advantages resulting from belief in it:—in itself, that is, truth could be altogether painful, harmful, fateful—. One likewise disputed the “truth” only when one promised oneself advantages from one’s victory—e.g., freedom from the ruling powers.

The methods of truth were not invented from the motives of truth, but from motives of power, from wanting to be superior. (Ibid.).

When Nietzsche claims that “advantages” are “a sign that truth is not involved at all,” he does not mean that our cognitive apparatus has evolved never to reflect truths. Rather, he means that the motivations to affirm or deny truth are often rooted in a desire for social advantage, particularly “wanting to be superior.” This claim stands or falls independently of any claim about the truth of evolutionary epistemology.

So the primary passages that seem to pit Nietzsche’s evolutionary debunking argument against a naturalized epistemology fail to do so. Of course, this does not imply that Nietzsche denies that we should understand epistemology through an evolutionary lens. I have argued only that his evolutionary epistemology does not threaten the truth of beliefs closely connected with the sciences.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, nothing considered here implies that Nietzsche does not utilize evolutionary debunking arguments. In fact, he often employs such arguments to challenge beliefs that cannot be naturalized. For example, he writes,

*Historical refutation as the definitive refutation.*—In former times, one sought to prove that there is no God—today one indicates how the belief that there is a God could arise and how this belief acquired its weight and importance: a counter-proof that there is no God thereby becomes superfluous (D 95, see also GM II: 16 ff.).

Nietzsche famously does not construct formal arguments against God’s existence, such as showing that the necessary features of God are logically incompatible with the nature of God’s manifestation in the world. Instead, he presents debunking arguments that elucidate biological

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and cultural factors involved in the emergence of belief in God that effectively undermine our reasons for accepting that belief. This renders traditional arguments “superfluous.” Debunking arguments are crucial for Nietzsche because they expose erroneous beliefs and clear a path for alternative positions. Assessing these new positions seems to be the task of an epistemology in close relation with the sciences.

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### NOTES

1. I use the following translations and abbreviations of Friedrich Nietzsche’s texts: *Antichrist* (A), in *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 565–656; *Beyond Good and Evil* (BGE), trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989); *Daybreak* (D), ed. Maudemarie Clark and Brian Leiter, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1997); *Human, All Too Human* (HH), trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1996); *On the Genealogy of Morals* (GM), trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Vintage Books, 1989); *The Gay Science* (GS), ed. Bernard Williams, trans. Josefine Nauckoff (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2001); *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (Z), ed. and trans. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1976), 121–439; *Twilight of the Idols* (TI), trans. Duncan Large (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1998); “On Truth and Lies in a Non-moral Sense,” (TL) in *Philosophy and Truth*, ed. and trans. Daniel Breazeale (Amherst, MA: Humanity Books, 1979), 79–100. References to Nietzsche’s unpublished writings are standardized, whenever possible, to refer to the most accessible print editions of Nietzsche’s notebooks and publications: *Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA), compiled under the general editorship of Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari and based on the complete edition of the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGW) (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1967).

2. See also KSA 11:38[3], 11:26[12], 12:14[152], 11:34[81], 12:9[38], 12:6[14]; GS 111, 121.

3. See also Peter Poellner, *Nietzsche and Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 145.

4. See Brian Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Leiter, “Nietzsche’s Naturalism Reconsidered,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Nietzsche*, ed. Ken Gemes and John Richardson, 576–98 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

5. See Maudemarie Clark and David Dudrick, “The Naturalisms of *Beyond Good and Evil*,” in *A Companion to Nietzsche* ed. Keith Ansell-Pearson, 148–68 (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2006); and Clark and Dudrick, *The Soul of Nietzsche’s “Beyond Good and Evil”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 130–35.

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6. See Richard Schacht, *Making Sense of Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 187–205; Schacht, “Nietzsche’s Naturalism,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* 43, no. 2 (2012): 185–212; Christa Acampora, *Contesting Nietzsche* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 77–80, 92–95; Joseph Rouse, *How Scientific Practices Matter: Reclaiming Philosophical Naturalism* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2002), 4.

7. See, e.g., HH I: 2; KSA 12:9[48].

8. This is a common theme in the entire first essay of GM.

9. See Daniel Z. Korman, “Ordinary Objects,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter 2011 ed.), ed. Edward N. Zalta, <<http://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2011/entries/ordinary-objects/>>.

10. Portions of this section are adopted from my “Scientific Fictionalism and the Problem of Inconsistency in Nietzsche,” *Journal of Nietzsche Studies* (forthcoming).

11. Those who have stressed this point include John T. Wilcox, *Truth and Value in Nietzsche: A Study of His Metaphysics and Epistemology* (Washington, DC: University Press of America, 1982), 128–36; and Alexander Nehamas, *Nietzsche: Life as Literature* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1985), 56–61, 72.

12. For other passages that associate falsification with simplification, see KSA 11:34[46], 11:37[4], 12:7[54], 13:14[93], 11:26[61]; HH I: 11, 19; GS 110, 111, 354; BGE 24, 192.

13. This is emphasized in Paul Teller, “Representation in Science,” in *Routledge Companion to the Philosophy of Science*, ed. Martin P. Curd, 490–96 (New York: Routledge, 2008).

14. For mathematics, see, e.g., HH I: 11, 19; GS 355; KSA 12:9[97], 12:7[4], 12:2[139]. For logic, see, e.g., HH I: 18; GS 111; KSA 12:2[90], 11:40[13], 12:7[9], 12:2[139]. For discussion, see Cristoph Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 81–86.

15. See, e.g., Babette E. Babich, *Nietzsche’s Philosophy of Science* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994).

16. What follows about approximate truth is indebted to insights developed by Teller, “Representation in Science.”

17. One might point out that Nietzsche denies approximate truth when he remarks, “The world *which matters to us* 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 nearer to truth*, for—there is no ‘truth’” (KSA 12: 2[108], second emphasis mine). There is no “truth” for Nietzsche only in the sense that there is no way for our representations to correspond to the world as it is constitutively apart from our appropriations of it. There is no getting “nearer” to this conception of the world since Nietzsche thinks such a realm is either unintelligible or does not exist. Denying this conception of approximate truth does not entail a rejection of the kind of approximate truth I attribute to him.

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18. This example comes from Teller, “Representation in Science,” 493. Nietzsche’s account differs from Teller’s in that Teller employs the idea of a completely determinate or perfectly precise representation without qualification. For example, he talks about someone’s “true” height in opposition to a “false precise statement,” which it seems Nietzsche would deny.

19. See Andre Kukla, *Social Constructivism and the Philosophy of Science* (New York: Routledge, 2000); and Paul Boghossian, *Fear of Knowledge* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), for statements of this view, along with critical comments.

20. See BGE P, 234, 253; GM I: 9, 11, III: 11; EH “Clever” 3; A 20, 39, 59; GS 99, 355; HH I: 234, 267; TI “Errors” 3; KSA 12:2[131], 12:10[53], 12:7[1], 12:2[204], 12:2[87], 12:9[144], 11:36[22], 12:9[48].

21. See, e.g., HH I: 16; KSA 12:7[60]; 12:2[175].

22. Richard Schacht, *Nietzsche* (London: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1983), 85.

23. The “them” in this sentence is best read as a placeholder for whatever it is that we “project” a “meaning” into in order for it to become a fact.

24. One might claim that, for Nietzsche, the fact that a thing has a perspectival essence does not imply that it is socially constructed. Nietzsche seems to think reality consists in forces, each of which has a particular perspective, and objects are the product of how forces conjoin into bundles based on their intrinsic perspectival natures (see Steven Hales and Rex Welshon, *Nietzsche’s Perspectivism* [Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000], 72; and Tsarnia Doyle, *Nietzsche on Epistemology and Metaphysics: The World in View* [Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009], 177). But this view faces difficulties. Nietzsche suggests that intrinsic properties, or properties an object has (if any) that are at least ontologically independent of our actions, fail to constitute an object’s identity (KSA 12:9[40]). There is even good reason to believe Nietzsche rejects intrinsic properties (see KSA 13:14[153], 13:14[79]). “Perspectivism,” most basically understood as the view that each force has a perspective, is compatible with such a rejection. Perspectives ontologically depend on other perspectives. My view is that the objecthood of a bundle of forces is ontologically dependent on our activities. Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising these concerns.

25. Cf. KSA 12:2[77], 12:9[144], 11:35[35], 13:14[98], 12:2[150], 12:2[152], 12:5[19].

26. The “its” in this sentence is best read as a placeholder for a group of properties to which a concept is applied.

27. Specifically, for Nietzsche, properties are the “effects” of the interactions of forces at the microscopic level of reality (see KSA 12:2[85], 13:14[184], 13:14[93], 12:14[79]).

28. For an extended presentation and defense of the view that Nietzsche embraces object constructivism, see my “Nietzsche on Objects,” *Nietzsche-Studien* (forthcoming). For other versions of Nietzsche’s constructivism, see Nehamas, *Nietzsche*, chap. 2; R. Lanier Anderson, “Truth and Objectivity in Perspectivism,”

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in *Synthese* 115 (1998): 1–32; Cristoph Cox, *Nietzsche: Naturalism and Interpretation* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 152–63. Nietzsche’s object constructivism prefigures similar positions defended later by William James, in *Pragmatism* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1981), and Nelson Goodman, in *Ways of Worldmaking* (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett Publishing Company, 1978).

29. Cf. Amie Thomasson, *Ordinary Objects* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 56–67.

30. There are two recent nonconstructivist Kantian-informed readings of Nietzsche. Kevin Hill, in *Nietzsche’s Critiques: the Kantian Foundations of His Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), asks how Nietzsche can distinguish a reality that depends on human interpreters from a mind-dependent reality not currently perceived by human interpreters (138). Hill holds that Nietzsche adopts the panpsychist view that reality consists in forces and forces are minded. So, nothing goes unobserved. Nietzsche’s texts, however, suggest a different response to the problem. Nietzsche appears to adopt Kant’s position that reality not currently perceived by us exists because reality is what we can encounter in possible experience (see Kant, *The Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. and ed. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998]: A496/B524–A497/B525; KSA 5:19, 12:2[154], D 48, cf. KSA 12:9[91], 12:7[49]). This solidifies Nietzsche’s object constructivism. Tsarnia Doyle, in *Nietzsche on Epistemology and Metaphysics*, also defends a nonconstructivist Kantian reading. For Doyle, Nietzsche thinks Kant’s view that objects are constitutively dependent on innate concepts is indistinguishable from the problematic idealist view that objects are mere mental representations (26, 30–32). This motivates Nietzsche to reject Kant’s account that concepts partially constitute objecthood and adopt instead the Kantian position that concepts are regulative tools that establish the guiding framework for inquiry (35–43). Unfortunately, Doyle fails to challenge the many passages in Nietzsche that report that objects are constructed entities—and these entities are not merely ideas. Object constructivism also assumes that concepts play a regulative role in inquiry. Concepts guide inquiry by organizing our environment into objects. Thanks to an anonymous referee for pressing these issues.

31. See BGE 134; TI “Reason 3”; KSA 12:5[19].

32. Here I agree with Maudemarie Clark in her *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990). My account is crucially different from Clark’s, however. Clark argues that, for Nietzsche, true beliefs correspond to mind-independent, ordinary objects of experience (31, 40, 107, 121). On this view, “the world exists independently of our representations of it” (40) in the sense that objects are “ontologically . . . distinct from knowers and their representations” (45). My constructivist interpretation is, then, incompatible with Clark’s reading.

33. What might threaten the truth of our beliefs in close relation with the sciences is what Clark and Dudrick call the “*will to value*” (see *The Soul of Nietzsche’s “Beyond Good and Evil.”* Clark and Dudrick hold that, in BGE,

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Nietzsche lays out a tension between the will to truth, exemplified by naturalist inquiry, and the will to value, exemplified by our tendency to see the world as it ought to be. Understanding the will to value requires a normative framework, one that refers to a space of reasons. So Clark and Dudrick separate the empirical from the normative. Nietzsche's commitment to scientific constructivism, however, suggests that, for him, naturalist inquiry will always be constitutively dependent on our rational activity. On a constructivist conception of science, the determinate nature of empirical phenomena can properly be understood only by appeal to the judgments agents make about that phenomena.

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