NIETZSCHE’S “ON TRUTH AND LIE”: A TROPOLOGICAL RESPONSE

TO KANT’S FIRST CRITIQUE

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DEDICATION

To my Mom, who would have genuinely found this thesis interesting simply because it interests me.
Many lament that the words of the wise are again and again only similes, but unusable in daily life, and we have only this alone. When the sage says, “go over,” he does not mean that one should go over to another side, what one could have still achieved anyhow, if the result would be worth the way; but rather he means some fantastic over there, something we do not know, which also is not closely designated by him, and which thus can not help us here at all. All these similes only really want to say that the incomprehensible is incomprehensible, and that we have known. But that with which we struggle everyday is another thing.
To that one says, “Why defend yourselves? If you would follow the similes, then you yourselves would become similes, and with that already free of your daily troubles.”
The other says, “I bet that is also a simile.”
The first says, “You have won.”
The second says, “But unfortunately only in simile.”
The first says, “No, in reality; in simile you have lost.”

--Franz Kafka “On Similes”
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Nietzsche’s “On Truth and Lie”: A Tropological Response to
Kant’s First Critique
by
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Master of Arts in Rhetoric and Writing Studies
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In this study, I examine how Friedrich Nietzsche’s definition of truth as a “moveable army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms” in “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” responds to Immanuel Kant’s Critique of Pure Reason. First, I evaluate the ways in which Nietzsche’s trope of metaphor as a carrying-over critiques Kant’s constitutive elements of cognition, demonstrating that the synthetic relationship between intuitions and concepts in cognition is neither a priori nor determinate. Second, I focus on how Nietzsche’s trope of metonymy as an exchange of cause and effect responds to Kant’s a priori concept of causality, illustrating that the idea of causality is not only developed a posteriori through lived-experiences, but also that Kant’s synthetic judgments are merely a metonymic exchange from the concrete to the abstract. Third, I consider in what respects Nietzsche’s trope of anthropomorphism as a peculiar synecdoche appropriates Kant’s own subject-centered idealism, accepting the limits of cognition yet arguing that we must overcome skepticism through art rather than faith. I conclude by suggesting how Nietzsche’s appropriation, critique, and performance of Kant allow us to reconsider the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy beyond the conventional screen of conflict.
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, scholars have written extensively on the “Nietzschean turn” in rhetoric.¹ These studies have focused on Nietzsche’s recovery of the sophistical tradition, demonstrated his profound influence on the work of twentieth-century thinkers, and proposed new methodological avenues in historiography and interpretation following his form of genealogy.² Nietzsche’s significance has been so pervasive that recently Joshua Reeves and Ethan Stoneman proposed using Heidegger as a way to overcome his “aesthetic differentiation” in order to “provid[e] a reconciliation of truth and art” (141).³ What has been absent from these discussions thus far is Nietzsche’s own influences with respect to his theory of language. Daniel Breazeale’s article “Word, World, and Nietzsche” indicates that Nietzsche’s views on language are inspired by Immanuel Kant’s transcendental philosophy: “The Kantian turn taken by Nietzsche’s philosophy of language is a subject of considerable interest, as well as a source of considerable difficulty for Nietzsche himself” (304). Not only does this Kantian inheritance create a tension in Nietzsche’s work, but it also presents an obstacle for scholars of rhetoric, who until recently have dismissed Kant’s significance to the discipline—a dismissal prompted by Kant’s own often cited criticisms of rhetoric.⁴ But as the scholarship of Gina Ercolini, Scott Stroud, Pat Gehrke, and Don Paul Abbott has

¹ See Whitson and Poulakos; Consigny; Thomas, “Reflections”; Hawhee, “Burke.”
² On Nietzsche’s recovery of the sophists, see Consigny; Crick. On Nietzsche’s influence on contemporary theory, see Hawhee, “Burke”; Tell. On Nietzsche’s methodological contributions, see Del Caro.
³ Specifically, they refer to the “aesthetic turn” in rhetoric, first elaborated on by Whitson and Poulakos.
⁴ See Kant’s Critique of the Power of Judgment 51–53.
contributed to a reassessment of Kant in rhetorical studies, perhaps, we are now able to recognize and examine the Kantian influence in Nietzsche’s work as well.

In order to begin reconstructing Kant’s largely unrecognized influence on his successor’s theory of language, I propose taking as my starting point Nietzsche’s posthumously published essay “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense” and analyzing it in light of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*. While this comparison may seem incongruent at first because Nietzsche never mentions the philosopher by name in the essay nor does Kant propose any explicit theory of language in his treatise, there exist clear allusions to Kant’s first *Critique* throughout Nietzsche’s text. A few examples of this are when Nietzsche makes an ironic aside about dogmatic assertions (KGW III.2, 374); rejects the definition of truth as correspondence (KGW III.2, 378); and expresses a mistrust of idealism (KGW III.2, 379). Additionally, Nietzsche is working with explicitly Kantian vocabulary and ideas from the first *Critique,* including things-in-themselves, intuitions, concepts, perception, schema as well as forms, space, and time from the “Transcendental Aesthetic.” But most significantly, Nietzsche uses the Kantian terms *Erkennen* and *Erkenntnis,* which reflect his predecessor’s influence when they are rendered as cognizing and cognition; unfortunately, these terms in “On Truth and Lie” have been thus far translated as knowing and knowledge, obscuring this direct connection between Nietzsche’s text and the first *Critique.* This connection becomes more evident when contrasting Kant’s definition of pure *a priori* cognition with Nietzsche’s response. Kant explains, “Among *a priori* cognitions [*Erkenntnissen*], however, those are called pure [*rein*] with which nothing empirical is mixed” (B3; 137). Nietzsche replies, in

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5 I cite references to Nietzsche’s work from the *Kritische Studienausgabe* (KSA) and the *Kritische Gesamtausgabe* (KGW) with the anthology abbreviation followed by the volume and page number.

6 Werner S. Pluhar argues in the “Translator’s Preface” that “Kant’s *Erkenntnis* (similarly for the verb) is translated always as ‘cognition,’ never as ‘knowledge,’ which renders *Wissen.* The two German terms are by no means synonymous, and hence translating both as ‘knowledge’ leads to grave inaccuracies, including illusory contradictions” (xix–xx).

7 For the *Critique of Pure Reason,* I rely on the Paul Guyer and Allen W. Wood translation. I cite references to Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* in the conventional way by providing the page numbers of the two different German Akademie editions of the complete works as A or B followed by the page number of the English translation.
contradistinction to pure cognition, that a person “desires the pleasant, live-preserving consequences of truth. . . . toward pure inconsequential cognition [reine folgenlose Erkenntnis] he is indifferent” (KGW III.2, 372).\(^8\)

While these allusions from “On Truth and Lie,” written circa 1873, are the focus my analysis, Nietzsche’s posthumously published notebooks from the summer of 1872 to the beginning of 1873 provide supporting evidence that his ideas in his essay explicitly engage with Kant, mentioning the philosopher by name eighteen times and in one instance quoting directly from the first Critique. These notebooks also provide additional theoretical definitions for the tropes of metaphor, metonymy, and anthropomorphism that illuminate some of the idiosyncrasies in Nietzsche’s usage of these terms in “On Truth and Lie.”

Nietzsche’s lecture notes from 1872–73 also aid in clarifying his more specialized terminology. As a result of the richness of these supporting materials, written approximately at the same time as “On Truth and Lie,” my comparative analysis will employ a standard hermeneutic strategy, interpreting Nietzsche’s essay in relation to his other contemporary work. This practice has been long employed by scholars of Aristotle’s Rhetoric, illuminating this text with reference to the Politics and the Nicomachean Ethics.\(^9\) While my own analysis will not go far beyond Nietzsche’s work for definitional purposes, it will attempt to construct more complete designations for the terms he utilizes in “On Truth and Lie” as well as draw strong connections between his text and Kant’s.

Although there are some passages within “On Truth and Lie” that can be construed as responses to Plato and Schopenhauer, this study will focus exclusively on its Kantian influence and response.\(^10\) Further, I will not be examining other noteworthy influences on Nietzsche’s theory of language, such as Gustav Gerber and Eduard von Hartmann.\(^11\)

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\(^8\) Unless otherwise indicated, all translations of Nietzsche’s work are my own.

\(^9\) For examples of this practice, see Rorty’s collection, Essays.

\(^10\) For a reading of Nietzsche as a critique of Platonism, see Thomas, Reading Nietzsche; for a discussion of Schopenhauer’s influence on “On Truth and Lie,” see Kopp.

\(^11\) See Crawford.
Additionally, I do not wish here to revisit the debate over the “aesthetic turn” in rhetoric versus rhetoric as epistemic, in which one side overdetermines Nietzsche’s aesthetic argument, while the other relies on reductionist and polemical readings. The untoward result,” as Scott Consigny writes about scholarship with respect to the sophists, “is that we possess a variety of ‘Nietzschean readings’… that tend to silence Nietzsche’s own distinctive voice” (5). In an attempt to move beyond interpretations that obscure Nietzsche’s voice, I propose to pay close attention to Nietzsche’s own words and to instances where he and Kant intersect and diverge. My intention is to advance a reading of Nietzsche that resists reinforcing the simplistic binaries of aesthetic and epistemic, artistic and scientific, and rhetorical and philosophical. In doing so, I hope to demonstrate that even Nietzsche’s epistemological skepticism contains epistemic implications; that his criticism of the scientific worldview involves an appreciation for its persuasiveness, while his privileging of an artistic worldview includes its own limitations; and that a rhetorical understanding of philosophy is possible in addition to the more common philosophical consideration of rhetoric.

In this study, I will examine how Nietzsche’s definition of truth as a “moveable army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms” in “On Truth and Lie” responds to Kant’s three types of synthetic judgments from the first *Critique* (KGW III.2, 374). In order to establish a rhetorical framework, I first consider the commonplace of rhetoric and philosophy in conflict through the lens of John Muchelbauer’s distinction between programmatic and productive reading. Within this framework, I further explore what Karlyn Kohrs Campbell has referred to as textual agency with respect to the performative aspects of Nietzsche’s response to Kant. Next, I situate Kant’s influence on Nietzsche’s early work, and assess the respective receptions of both thinkers within rhetorical scholarship. My principal argument proceeds as follows. First, I evaluate the ways in which Nietzsche’s trope of metaphor as a carrying-over critiques Kant’s constitutive elements of cognition. Nietzsche demonstrates that the synthetic relationship between intuitions and concepts in cognition is

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12 For the aesthetic position see Whitson and Poulakos; Thomas, “Reflections”; Ayotte, Poulakos, and Whitson. For the epistemic position see Hikins, “Nietzsche”; Cherwitz and Darwin; Hikins, “Seductive.”
neither *a priori* nor determinate, but rather it is metaphoric, developmental, and defeasibly grounded in socio-linguistic relations. Second, I focus on how Nietzsche’s trope of metonymy as an exchange of cause and effect responds to Kant’s *a priori* concept of causality. Nietzsche asserts that the idea of causality is not only developed *a posteriori* through lived-experiences, but also that Kant’s synthetic judgments are merely a metonymic exchange from the concrete to the abstract. Third, I consider in what respects Nietzsche’s trope of anthropomorphism as a peculiar synecdoche appropriates Kant’s own subject-centered idealism. Nietzsche radicalizes Kant’s anthropomorphic interpretation of space and time, accepting the limits of cognition yet arguing that we must overcome skepticism through art rather than faith. I conclude by suggesting how Nietzsche’s appropriation, critique, and performance of Kant allow us to reconsider the relationship between rhetoric and philosophy beyond the conventional screen of conflict.
CHAPTER 2

RHETORICAL FRAMEWORK

The idea of “rhetoric and philosophy in conflict” became a commonplace among scholars of rhetoric long before the publication of Samuel Ijsseling’s historical survey of the same name. Conflict has become a ready-made screen through which to interpret the long and complex relationship between these two disciplines. And, of course, as with any screen there is a tendency to omit and oversimplify in order to shape a coherent narrative. Too often the result is that the richness and complexity which occur at particular points of intersection between rhetoric and philosophy is obscured. Consequently, we have seen what John Muckelbauer describes as a programmatic engagement with this intersection rather than a productive one. Muckelbauer reminds us “[t]hat reading is not a single, homogenous practice that acquires its diversity by being filtered through different methodologies, theories, interests, or ideologies. Instead, there are fundamentally different ways of encountering texts, different styles of reading that produce different effects” (74). With respect to Nietzsche, programmatic engagement has most recently taken the form of debates (as noted above) over epistemic rhetoric or rhetoric as epistemic. In these debates, Nietzsche is made to answer for contemporary disputes which reformulate the most banal interpretations of his work as irrational in either a derogatory or celebratory sense. Either way, Nietzsche is no longer read as a philosopher, either by those who are more traditionally philosophically inclined, or by those who desire to claim him solely in the name of rhetoric. What is problematic about this—besides the reification of the idea of purely oppositional conflict—is that Nietzsche himself describes what he does as philosophy, just as Isocrates had done two millennia before him. The question arises generally with respect to philosophy and rhetoric, and with Nietzsche specifically, what are we to make of intersections where disciplinary boundaries are not neatly ordered in pure opposition and conflict? I make no claims to have a readily available answer to this question, whereas Muckelbauer reminds us, “[i]n a
programmatic reading, then, the reader must know the answer to the question . . . and this answer cannot be altered through the practice of reading” (91).

With the intention of moving beyond a programmatic engagement, I turn to Muckelbauer’s call for a more productive engagement: “To read productively means not only to attempt to alter the question, but to alter oneself through the question, to encounter a text hoping to think differently through engagement with it” (92). What is required in addition to altering the question from one with an answer prior to engagement with the text to one that may not fit neatly with our preconceptions is what Debra Hawhee describes as an “active, responsive submission.” This approach entails a “reading practice [which] would ask that a ‘reader’ submit to a text—it’s terms, its style, its movements—as a way of taking it seriously” (“Bodily” 160). It is this combination of submitting to the text, or close reading, and articulating questions differently that moves us toward the practice of productive engagement with both rhetoric and philosophy generally and Nietzsche and Kant specifically—as Muckelbauer argues, “Productive reading . . . is less concerned with getting behind the surface or uncovering the truth (What does it mean? Is [the author] right or wrong?) and more concerned with getting it different (What can it do? What connections does it make? How does it work?)” (91). These questions, which concern productive engagement, are particularly relevant with respect to Nietzsche’s “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense.” What can it do? suggests the significant possibility of doing philosophy rhetorically. What connections does it make? speaks to Nietzsche’s own synthesis, appropriation, and transformation of Kantian terminology. And how does it work? points to the performative aspects of Nietzsche’s text.

Concerning this last question, I will examine what Karlyn Kohrs Campbell calls a textual power that emerges in artistry or craft: “Here is the agency of stylized repetition that has ironic overtones; the citation that appropriates and alters. Agency emerges out of performances or actions that, when repeated, fix meaning through sedimentation. Agency equally emerges in performances that repeat with difference, altering meaning” (7). It is this second definition of agency that characterizes Nietzsche’s performance in relation to Kant’s philosophy. While Nietzsche’s uses Kantian terminology, he does so in a manner that appropriates and alters the meaning of the terms; he replaces the epistemological and
metaphysical usage of terms with a rhetorical and tropical agency. The agency that Nietzsche performs is what he calls the dissimulation of the free intellect:

> With creative relish it mixes up metaphors and moves the boundary stones of abstractions. … And when it smashes [the framework of concepts], mixes it up, ironically puts it together again, pairing the most foreign and separating the nearest, thus it reveals that it has no use for these makeshifts of need and that it now will not be lead by concepts, but rather by intuitions. (KGW III.2, 382)

It is with this description of the free intellect that Nietzsche’s text performs a tropical agency with respect to Kantian transcendental idealism; he disrupts Kant’s neatly ordered system, appropriating his terms and transforming their usage and meaning.

As Kenneth Burke incisively demonstrates, while our terministic screens may be a reflection of reality, they are also a selection and a deflection of reality (“Terministic” 45). In my analysis of the relationship between Nietzsche’s text and Kant’s first *Critique*, I am not unaware of the limitations of my own selection and deflection. Be this as it may, my deflection of the interpretive lens of conflict between philosophy and rhetoric does not preclude the instances of critique within Nietzsche’s essay. However, it does privilege moments in which this relationship reveals itself as both productive and performative. In doing so, I hope to multiply rather than truncate grounded interpretations.
CHAPTER 3

RECEPTIONS

Before examining the receptions of Kant and Nietzsche in rhetorical scholarship, I will first explore Nietzsche’s own reception of Kant’s work. The significance of Kant’s influence on Nietzsche’s thought throughout his corpus is well documented. R. Kevin Hill cites that Nietzsche refers to Kant in his writings thirty-six times between 1865–69, seventy-eight between 1870–74, fourteen between 1875–79, eight-nine between 1880–84, and one hundred sixty-four between 1885–89 (19). Christian J. Emden points out that one of Nietzsche’s two abandoned doctoral dissertations was on Kant (the other on Democritus): “Within this context, Nietzsche refers several times to Kant’s Kritik der reinen Vernunft (1781) and Kritik der Urteilskraft (1790), and his own considerations pretty closely follow a Kantian line of argument that seems to have been influenced by the contemporary studies of Kuno Fischer, Karl Rosenkranz, and Friedrich Albert Lange” (38). There seems to be a consensus in Nietzsche scholarship that his relationship to Kant’s work is heavily mediated through secondary sources: Hill’s traces Nietzsche’s reading of Kant primarily through Fischer, Lange, and Schopenhauer (13–15). While Emden confirms these sources, he provides two additional influences: Karl Schaarschmidt’s lectures on the history of philosophy and, as noted above, Rosenkranz’s Geschichte der Kant’schen Philosophie (38–39). Claudia Crawford likewise corroborates the influences of Schopenhauer, Fischer, and Lange, but also cites Gustav Gerber and Eduard von Hartmann’s influence on his theory of language (xi–x, 106). And again, Thomas H. Brobjer finds the same three principal sources, adding Friedrich Überweg’s Grundriss der Geschichte der Philosophie von Thales bis auf die Gegenwart (37).

What this suggests is that Nietzsche’s work is not only heavily influenced by Kant, as demonstrated by his repeated references to him, but also his use of secondary source material is varied and the result of diverse influences. Even the substantiated three principal sources
of Lange, Schopenhauer, and Fischer may have given Nietzsche’s understanding of Kant a particular depth. As Hill suggests, “In some respects the three interpretations reinforced each other; in other respects their disagreements would have aided Nietzsche in developing a sense of richness and ambiguity of Kant’s texts” (16). While it seems that Nietzsche relied primarily on these secondary sources, Hill argues, “There is some evidence suggesting a direct acquaintance with the first Critique in 1872–3 and 1886 as well, which would have supplemented his earlier reading of Kuno Fischer’s close commentary” (20). Brobjer complicates Nietzsche’s direct reading of the first Critique, noting, “There is no work by Kant in Nietzsche’s library, and almost certainly Nietzsche never owned any work by Kant” (37). Although there is a reading list from the late 1860s in which the first Critique is listed, Brobjer concludes that Nietzsche may have never read it (37).

Unsurprisingly, Nietzsche quotes Kant in two places in his early work on rhetoric and language. The first is from his lecture “Concept of Rhetoric” in which he quotes from the third Critique. The passage that he cites contrasts the distinction between rhetoric and poetry where Kant claims, “Eloquence [Beredsamkeit] is the art of conducting a business of the understanding as a free play of the imagination; poetry that of carrying out a free play of the imagination as a business of the understanding” (KGW I.4, 416).13 Rather than contesting Kant’s observation, Nietzsche uses this argument to frame the role of rhetoric in antiquity: “With this the specifics of Hellenistic life are characterized: to interpret all business of the understanding, life’s seriousness, poverty, even danger itself as play” (KGW II.4, 416). The second quote from Kant is found in Nietzsche’s fragmentary essay from 1869/70 “On the Origin of Language.” Here, Nietzsche cites Kant from the first Critique: “Kant says: ‘A great part, perhaps the greatest part of the business of our reason consists in analysis of the concepts that we already have of objects’” (KGW II.2, 185).14 Nietzsche uses this passage

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13 See Critique of the Power of Judgment §51; 198.

14 Crawford points out that Nietzsche actually misquotes Kant here because he takes this passage “word for word from Hartmann’s Philosophy of the Unconscious” (22n1). Compare with Kant’s actual passage: “A great part, perhaps the greatest part of the business of our reason consists in analysis of the concepts that we already have of objects” (A5/B9; 129). This misquotation might also support the claim that Nietzsche was more
from Kant to develop a particular insight with respect to language: “One thinks of subject and object; the concept of the judgment is abstracted from the grammatical proposition” (KGW II, 185). This suggests, as will be explored further below, that Nietzsche understands the products of cognition and logical judgments in Kant as originating first and foremost from the abstraction of linguistic relations. This also demonstrates the originality and sophistication with which Nietzsche appropriates Kant’s philosophy.

**KANT’S RECEPTION**

The first edition of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* was published in 1781, with a revised second edition published in 1787. It was the first book in Kant’s three-part critical project, which also includes the *Critique of Practical Reason* and the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. As Guyer and Wood point out in their introduction to the first Critique, Kant responds “on several fronts against several different alternative positions represented in early philosophy generally and within the German Enlightenment in particular.” Most notable of these different positions are the metaphysical dogmatism of Christian Wolff and Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten, the skepticism of David Hume, and the empiricism of John Locke. In the first Critique, there are also significant responses to René Descartes and George Berkeley as well as to a less defined position that Kant refers to as indifferentism (2).

Guyer and Wood describe the reaction to the first edition of *Critique of Pure Reason*, published May 1, 1781, as an “initially indifferent or hostile reception” (23). They note, “After a year of silence, broken only by two friendly but insignificant reviews published in Frankfurt and Greifswald, the *Critique* finally received its first serious review in the first supplementary volume of the *Göttingischen Anzeigen von gelehrten Sachen* for 1782” (67). Despite the initial criticism and lackluster public reaction, Kant subsequently published a revised second edition in 1787 that attempted to answer many of the charges leveled against the first. Today, Kant’s influence on the continental tradition in philosophy is unmistakable. From German Idealism to the Frankfurt School to phenomenology, Kant’s successors have familiar with secondary literature on Kant than with his actual texts.
had to engage in one way or another with his metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, or aesthetics.

The reception of Kant’s work in the field of rhetorical studies is, perhaps, as complex and tension filled as Nietzsche’s own reception of Kant. The controversy stems from Kant’s remarks in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: “Eloquence and well-spokenness (together, rhetoric) belong to beautiful art; but the art of the orator (*ars oratoria*), as the art of using the weakness of people for one’s own purposes (however well intentioned or even really good these may be) is not worthy of any respect at all” (§ 53; 205). Samuel Ijsseling’s chapter “Kant and The Enlightenment” in *Rhetoric and Philosophy in Conflict* (1976) is an early attempt to explicitly historicize Kant’s work into rhetorical scholarship. Ijsseling focuses primarily on Kant’s negative characterization of rhetoric from the third *Critique*, summarizing Kant’s position: “The art of persuasion is the work of a calculating mind which endeavors to achieve its designs… it is not liberating… but rather deprives man of his freedom and is a violent threat to his autonomy… not characterized by honesty and sincerity but by a serious of cunning artifices and fraudulent tricks” (84–85). Ijsseling likewise points to Kant’s essay “What Is Enlightenment?” to further demonstrate Kant’s characterization of rhetoric as destructive to the individual’s freedom and autonomy (86–88).

Kant’s criticism of rhetoric from the third *Critique* notwithstanding, notable twentieth-century theorists appropriate his other work toward rhetorical ends. For example, Chaïm Perelman and Lucie Olbrechts-Tyteca in *The New Rhetoric* explore Kant’s distinction between conviction and persuasion put forward in *Critique of Pure Reason*. They use Kant’s terms as a point of departure, modifying the relationship between persuasion and action, conviction and audience, and argumentation and audience: “The Kantian view, though rather close to ours in its consequences, differs from it in making the opposition of *subjective* and *objective* its criterion for distinguishing between persuasion and conviction” (29; italics in original). They equally depend on Kant for the development for their germinal notion of the

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15 The following paragraphs on Kant’s reception are indebted to Gina Ercolini’s detailed account.
universal audience. John W. Ray observes in “Perelman’s Universal Audience” a close affinity between Kant’s moral philosophy and Perelman and Olbrecht-Tyteca’s universal audience. He argues that Perelman, like Kant, creates a criterion for judgment that “serve[s] as an absolute standard not dependent upon empirical experience. For Kant, this standard is the categorical imperative; for Perelman, it is the universal audience” (372).

There are likewise numerous examples of Kenneth Burke’s engagement with Kant’s philosophy. In *A Grammar of Motives*, Burke devotes two sections to discussing Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason* in order to arrive at a sketch of an agent in general (185-97). Burke also commits a considerable amount of analysis to Kant in his essay “A Dramatistic View of the Origins of Language.” Here, Burke continues his previous examination of Kant, supplemented by the *Critique of Practical Reason*: “Of Kant’s three great Critiques… the second leans most toward the Dramatistic. You might expect as much since it concerns ethics; and by the very nature of the case, ethics builds its terminology around the problem of action” (436). This essay draws many significant connections between Dramatism and transcendental philosophy, language and ethics, and the role of the negative and the positive in Kant’s ethical work.

Beginning with Robert J. Dostal’s article “Kant and Rhetoric” (1980), there has been a concerted effort to reexamine Kant’s seeming dismissal of rhetoric and to rehabilitate the philosopher’s different positions in the three critiques as well as in his other writings. Dostal argues that Kant’s critical view, when compared with classical assessments of rhetoric, demonstrates that he attributes to history a function that is traditionally reserved for rhetoric, thus complicating his appraisals of both disciplines. Pat J. Gehrke’s “Turning Kant Against the Priority of Autonomy: Communication Ethics and the Duty to Community” (2002) interprets Kant’s remarks on autonomy from *Critique of Practical Reason* through his Third Analogy of Experience from the first *Critique* in order to demonstrate that “Kant’s own work undermines the primacy of autonomy and better supports a communication ethic grounded in a duty to community” (2). Alternatively, Scott R. Stroud’s “Rhetoric and Moral Progress in Kant’s Ethical Community” (2005) focuses on Kant’s idea of the Kingdom of Ends in order to argue that his notion of religious community offers a rich perspective of both the cultivation of ethical community and the rhetoric which sustains it.
Don Paul Abbott’s “Kant, Theremin, and the Morality of Rhetoric” (2007) revisits Kant’s dismissal of rhetoric from the third Critique, examining how Franz Theremin’s Eloquence a Virtue responds to Kant’s charges. Abbott argues, “Theremin does this not only by asserting the virtue of rhetoric, but by demonstrating that rhetoric can, and indeed does, conform to Kant’s own standards of morality” (274). Gina Ercolini’s Kant’s Enlightenments Legacy: Rhetoric through Ethics, Aesthetics, and Style (2010) is perhaps the most ambitious attempt to recover Kant in rhetorical scholarship. Her project examines a wide spectrum of works from his corpus and synthesizes his varied views on ethics, taste, and style in order to argue, “Through the complex detour of Kant’s conflicted attitudes toward rhetoric, we arrive at an understanding of enlightenment that makes central the role of speech and public address by proxy” (242). What this scholarship has in common is an attempt by rhetoricians to reexamine, recover, and rehabilitate Kant’s contribution to the history of rhetoric, rather than take his seeming dismissal at face value.

**Nietzsche’s Reception**

The reception and circulation of Nietzsche’s “On Truth and Lie” is more difficult to investigate than the critical reaction to Kant’s first Critique due to its posthumous publication. Nietzsche himself only mentions the essay once in his published writings. The reference appears in the preface to the second volume of Human, All Too Human, written in September 1886. In this preface, Nietzsche distances himself from his previous positions found in Untimely Meditations, especially his commitment to Schopenhauer’s philosophy. He suggests that when he wrote “Schopenhauer as Educator,” he was already breaking with his predecessor:

I was, so far as my own development was concerned, already deep in the midst of moral scepticism and destructive analysis, *that is to say in the critique and likewise the intensifying of pessimism as understood hitherto*, and already ‘believed in nothing any more,’ as the people puts it, not even in Schopenhauer:
just at that time I produced an essay I have refrained from publishing, ‘On Truth and Falsehood in an Extra-Moral Sense.’ (209)\(^{16}\)

Here, Nietzsche moves on to discuss Wagner, leaving the reader with unanswered questions concerning this curious citation. Breazeale argues this passage “not only affirms the continuity of [Nietzsche’s] own intellectual development during the period in question (the early 1870s), but claims that the evidence for this affirmation is to be found in certain unpublished writings of the period” (xvi). Breazeale also suggests that the reason “On Truth and Lie” was not published is because it, along with other manuscripts, was “not intended for separate publication, but [was] meant to be integrated with the narrative history of Pre-Platonic philosophy” (xxii). This larger work on Pre-Platonic philosophy was never completed. What Breazeale’s research demonstrates is that Nietzsche’s unpublished writings of the early 1870s might better represent his views than those expressed in *Untimely Meditations*, and that Nietzsche’s decision not to publish this essay was not due to disavowal, but rather because it was never meant to be a stand-alone work. Most and Fries, however, speculate that Nietzsche’s decision to leave his essay unpublished was the result of the disciplinary pressure he found in Basel as a professor of philology as well as the poor reception of his first book, *The Birth of Tragedy*. They argue, “Nietzsche did not publish this essay… with the estimation that it… went beyond the scope of his work in Basel” (68). This further suggests that Nietzsche was far from being dissatisfied with this work, but rather understood that at that time and in that place it would not have found an audience.

The first full English translation of Nietzsche’s essay appears as “On Truth and Falsity in their Ultramoral Sense” in *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche* Vol. II (1911), translated by Maximilian Mügge. A more widely circulated rendition is Walter Kaufmann’s “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense,” appearing in his edited anthology *The Portable Nietzsche* (1954). However, Kaufmann’s translation is itself only partial, rendering approximately one quarter of the original text and, thus, presenting a highly abridged version. Daniel Breazeale provides a full translation of Nietzsche’s essay as “On

\(^{16}\) R. J. Hollingdale’s translation.

Twenty years prior to the reception of “On Truth and Lie” in rhetorical scholarship in the United States, Jean-Luc Nancy and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe published Nietzsche’s lecture notes in Poétique in 1971, entitled “Friedrich Nietzsche, Rhétorique et language.” Most and Fries note, “They also put their documentation into context with the bilingual edition from two years previous of the so-called ‘Philosopher’s Book’ (from the posthumous fragments of 1872–75) with the essay ‘On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense’” (55). In addition to this publication, Alan D. Schrift documents that “Derrida offered a seminar at the École Normale Supérieure, in the winter of 1969–70, devoted to a theory of philosophical discourse with a particular emphasis on the status of metaphor in philosophy” (85). One significant outcome of this seminar was Sarah Kofman’s Nietzsche and Metaphor, first published in 1972 in the original French. In this book, Kofman examines Nietzsche use of architecture metaphors in “On Truth and Lie” in which her “genealogical reading deciphers each of these fantastic architectures as symptoms of the health or sickness of their constructors” (61).

In 1979, Paul de Man’s Allegories in Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust brought many of these French perspectives on Nietzsche to American scholarship. In his reading of “Truth and Lie,” he argues, “This essay flatly states the necessary subversion of truth by rhetoric as the distinctive feature of all language” (110). In 1983, Carole Blair published “Nietzsche’s Lecture Notes on Rhetoric: a Translation” in Philosophy and Rhetoric, which was the first English translation of his first seven lectures. Then in 1989, Sander L.Gilman and David J. Parent along with Blair published Friedrich Nietzsche on Rhetoric and Language, which included Nietzsche’s complete lectures on rhetoric, a translation of “On Truth and Lie,” and other early writings on language. “On Truth and Lie” was effectively canonized within rhetorical studies in the United States with
its inclusion in the 1990 *The Rhetorical Tradition: Readings from Classical Times to the Present*, edited by Patricia Bizzell and Bruce Herzberg. The incorporation of Nietzsche’s essay into these last two publications is responsible for the subsequent proliferation of rhetorical scholarship on “On Truth and Lie” beginning in the early 1990s.

The first in-depth article about this work by Nietzsche is Peter Heckman’s “Nietzsche’s Clever Animal: Metaphor in ‘Truth and Falsity’” (1991) in which he examines Nietzsche’s essay in contrast to readings by de Man and Derrida, arguing that through Nietzsche’s use of metaphor, he not only illustrates his claims, but also performs them: “The most salient feature of ‘Truth and Falsity,’ it appears, is an insistence on its own self-destruction. … The text must insist on the subversion of its own literal message; this is in order to show what cannot be described” (319). Later articles focus on Nietzsche’s influence on twentieth-century rhetorical thinkers. Debra Hawhee’s “Burke and Nietzsche” (1999) examines the broader connections between the two thinkers throughout their respective works. She analyzes how Burke’s notion of perspective by incongruity from *Permanence and Change* has strong affinities with Nietzsche’s role of metaphor in “On Truth and Lie”: “a forceful turning of language against itself, a violent yet productive endeavor. An effect of this clashing? Art” (137). Likewise, Dave Tell traces the influence of Nietzsche’s metonymic function of substitution and reversal from “On Truth and Lie” in Foucault’s account of confession in “Rhetoric and Power: An Inquiry into Foucault’s Critique of Confession” (2010).

Other scholars use Nietzsche’s essay in order to answer questions concerning the conflictual relationship of philosophy and rhetoric. Douglas Thomas’s *Reading Nietzsche Rhetorically* (1999) argues that “On Truth and Lie” as well as other Nietzschean texts present “two competing views of the world”—the Platonic philosophical and the rhetorical—in which, he argues, Nietzsche’s philosophy has the ability to reverse the dominance of the Platonic tradition (1). Similarly, Steven Whitson and John Poulakos, in “Nietzsche and the Aesthetics of Rhetoric” (1993), see in Nietzsche’s work generally, and in “On Truth and Lie” specifically, the possibility of overturning the claims of epistemic rhetoric with a Nietzschean aesthetic rhetoric. In addition to these partisan readings, Nathan Crick’s “Nietzsche’s Sophist: Rhêtôr, Musician, Stoic” (2011) interprets Nietzsche’s essay as presenting three distinct worldviews that, when taken together, point toward new sophistical ideal: “these new
Sophists would create a new meaning for the earth by using the tools of the Stoic, the musician, and the rhêtôr to justify a discipline of suffering in the name of art” (101).

Other notable articles on Nietzsche’s “On Truth and Lie” offer new interpretations of his work as well as critical examinations of commonplace interpretations within the discipline. Bradford Vivian’s “Freedom, Naming, Nobility: The Convergence of Rhetorical and Political Theory in Nietzsche’s Philosophy” (2007) argues that “On Truth and Lie” offers insight into an unexamined agonistic model of political freedom in Nietzsche’s philosophy. Additionally, Drew Kopp’s “Nietzsche’s Teacher: The Invisible Rhetor” (2013) follows the scholarship of Nietzsche’s “On Truth and Lie” in order to critique the uninterrogated received interpretations of his essay in rhetorical studies since the French reception. His ultimate objective—although he does not support this claim and promises to address it in a later publication—is to demonstrate the unseen influence of Schopenhauer on Nietzsche’s essay. What this proliferation of scholarship on Nietzsche’s “On Truth and Lie” demonstrates is not only that this text is essential to understanding his significance to the discipline, but also that this text has had a wide range of interpretations and applications.
CHAPTER 4

PROLOGUE TO NIETZSCHE’S TROPOLOGICAL RESPONSE

What then is truth? A moveable army of metaphors, metonymies, and anthropomorphisms: in short, a sum of human relations, which have been poetically and rhetorically intensified, transferred, and adorned, and which after long usage seem to a people fixed, canonical and binding: truths are illusions, about which one has forgotten that they are [illusions]; metaphors, which have become worn and sensuously powerless; coins, which have lost their image and are considered now as metal, and no longer as coins.

--Nietzsche
KGW III, 2, 374–75

Nietzsche’s definition of truth, quoted above, is perhaps the most famous passage from “On Truth and Lie.” It is often cited by scholars, yet there is a tendency to examine it only cursorily, and rarely with respect to the individual tropes that furnish it. It is noteworthy that this definition comprises a single sentence, which suggests that it should be interpreted as a whole rather than piecemeal. Such an interpretation attends to the way in which the different constitutive elements work together, completing, if not a systematic, at least a comprehensive characterization of truth from the tropological standpoint. In order to better understand how these elements relate to each other and to Kant, we must first investigate individual terms, starting with metaphor and continuing on with metonymy and anthropomorphism.

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17 See Clark 65; de Man 110–11; Hawhee, “Burke” 136; Heckman 311; Kopp 439; Kofman 58; Vivian 376.
Kant argues that determinate cognition takes place in three types of synthetic judgments: “All relations of thinking in judgments are those a) of the predicate to the subject, b) of the ground to the consequence, and c) between the cognition that is to be divided and all the members of the division” (A73/B98; 208). It is to these types of judgments that Nietzsche responds with three types of tropes that structure human thinking: metaphor responds to the predicative determination of an object; metonymy examines the exchange of cause and effect; and anthropomorphism addresses the relationship between determinate concepts from the standpoint of the limits of cognition.

Synthetic judgments serve as predication of a subject in a logical proposition, but they also serve as a metaphor for the structure of cognition itself. Throughout the first Critique, synthesis is not only the way concepts and intuitions relate to one another, but also how these intuitions are schematized and how the human as subject is unified through apperception. Synthesis, understood tropologically, is the master trope that recurs in every stage of Kant’s epistemological system: “By synthesis in the most general sense, however, I understand the action of putting different representations together with each other and comprehending their manifoldness in one cognition” (A77/B103; 210). Synthesis is the necessary action, which must take place in order for his system to be unified. This means the synthesis of the manifold of intuition; the synthesis of reproduction in the imagination; and the synthesis of recognition in a concept (A98–110; 228–34).

Nietzsche makes a parallel move between the tropes of metaphor, metonymy, and anthropomorphism and our cognitive faculties. For Nietzsche tropes are transferences, which carry-over from one term to another. One might immediately see the similarity between synthesis and transference. Whereas Kant suggests our cognitions are logical, Nietzsche moves beyond the idea of tropes in their relationship to language and argues additionally that the very structure of our intuitive, symbolic, and conceptual capacity is tropological. If Kant’s master trope is synthesis that acts by combining, then Nietzsche’s are metaphor, metonymy, and anthropomorphism, which act to carry-over, exchange, and assimilate, respectively.

Nietzsche further suggests that even Kant’s principal cognitive activity of synthesis is itself tropological. Synthesis is perhaps Kant’s most central term for all the processes of cognition. He uses it not only to explain the logical function of combining intuitions and
concepts, but also as the ground for experience—the synthesis of apprehension in the intuition, reproduction in the imagination, and recognition in the concept (A95–110/B129–69; 226–34, 245–66). At the most fundamental level, then, synthesis is an action of combining differences into a unity. Nietzsche in his notebooks describes a process similar to Kant’s synthesis as tropological: “Tropes are that on which our sense perceptions are based, not on unconscious inferences. Similar identifies with similar—discovering any similarity in one and another thing is the original-process. The memory lives from this activity and practices it continually. Confusion is the original phenomenon” (KSA7, 19[217], 487).

While Kant calls identification and combination of difference through similarity synthesis, Nietzsche claims that this original tropological process is the result of a primary confusion. The synthesis on which Kant’s cognitive system depends is for Nietzsche only a fundamental drive to find similarity between things—to merely mistake one thing for another. And as will be discussed below, this original tropological confusion undermines Kant’s notion of truth as determinate correspondence which would result from synthesis.
CHAPTER 5

METAPHOR AND COGNITION

The trope of metaphor is the term Nietzsche uses to describe cognitive processes generally. The terms metaphor \([\text{Metapher}]\) and metaphors \([\text{Metaphern}]\) appear twenty times in “On Truth and Lie.” But for all its ubiquity, Nietzsche provides nothing in the way of definition in this essay for his specialized term. Daniel Breazeale’s thoughtful article “Word, World, Nietzsche” offers an exceptional insight that bridges the connection between Nietzsche’s description of tropes and his use of metaphor:

Breazeale’s etymological connection between the Greek term \(\text{μετα-φέρειν}\) and the German \(\text{übertragen}\) demonstrates the connection between Nietzsche’s two terms metaphor \([\text{Metapher}]\) and transference \([\text{übertragen}]\). Nietzsche’s use of \(\text{übertragen}\) and \(\text{Übertragung}\) reveals the performative aspects of metaphor that are often overlooked in the common usage of the term. The verb \(\text{übertragen}\) demonstrates the active carrying-over that takes place in metaphoric relations. \(\text{Übertragung}\) as a noun suggests the result or culmination of the carrying-over process. \(\text{Übertragung}\) becomes a conceptual screen through which Nietzsche views not only the function of language within social contexts and relations, but also human cognition and its development. But as Tim Murphy reminds us, Nietzsche uses \(\text{Übertragung}\) and \(\text{übertragen}\) to describe tropes beyond metaphor: “As a trope, metaphor is but one trope within the general economy of rhetorical tropology. As an extended concept \(\text{übertragen}\) describes the central operation of tropic economy as such” (23). Nietzsche uses \(\text{übertragung}\)
and übertragen to illustrate the performative aspects of the three tropes—metaphor, metonymy, and anthropomorphism—in “On Truth and Lie.” This notwithstanding, Übertragung and übertragen relate most specifically to the performance of metaphor, while metonymy operates as an exchange or reversal and anthropomorphism performs through assimilation.

**CONSTITUTIVE ELEMENTS OF SYNTHETIC AND METAPHORIC COGNITION**

Kant’s cognitive system depends on the synthesis of two key elements—sensible intuitions and intellectual concepts: “Intuition and concepts therefore constitute the elements of all our cognition, so that neither concepts without intuition corresponding to them in some way nor intuition without concepts can yield a cognition” (A50/B74; 193). For Kant, intuitions arise from our sensibility, where an object is given through the receptivity of the senses; and concepts arise from the intellectual faculty of the understanding, where an object is thought through the spontaneity of concepts in relation to our representations of these intuitions (A50/B74; 193). In order for concepts to correspond to intuitions, Kant argues that there must be a synthetic process in which the sensible and the intellectual are combined and unified in cognition: “It is just as necessary to make the mind’s concepts sensible (i.e., to add an object to them in intuition) as it is to make its intuitions understandable (i.e., to bring them under concepts). … Only from their unification can cognition arise” (A51–52/B75–76; 194). The process of synthesis in the first Critique is complex and relies on a strict division of labor in which different faculties combine diverse cognitive materials. This complexity notwithstanding, synthesis in Kant is fundamentally the unifying of heterogeneous intuitions and combining them with intellectual concepts, which arise from a completely separate and different sphere. It is precisely in this combination and unification of difference in Kantian synthesis where Nietzsche’s appropriation and critique of Kant through metaphor begins.

Nietzsche’s own description of cognition appropriates both of the Kantian elements of intuitions and concepts; yet he also introduces language as an additional constitutive element, thus problematizing the relationship between intuitions and concepts. Nietzsche also exchanges the performative relationship between these elements from one of Kantian synthesis to one of metaphoric transference, thereby complicating the notion of
correspondence between concepts and intuitions. While Kant separates these elements, insisting they arise from different “fundamental sources of the mind” (A50/B74; 193), Nietzsche argues that concepts are developed out of the sensible through the mediation of language. This process of how the sensible later becomes conceptual relies on a physiological account of sensibility and a process of metaphoric transference: “A nerve stimulus, first carries-over [übertragen] into an image! First metaphor. The image is again reformed in a sound! Second metaphor. And each time there is a complete overleaping of one sphere into the middle of an entirely different and new one” (KGW III.2, 373). Although Nietzsche is not always constant with his terminology in “On Truth and Lie,” he refers to these images in two different passages in this essay as intuitive metaphors [anschaulichen Metaphern] and metaphoric intuitions [Anschauungsmetapher], demonstrating their affinity with Kant’s sensible intuitions (KGW III.2, 375; 377). What Nietzsche’s modification of Kant’s terminology reinforces is a process of metaphorical transference, where each carrying-over lacks strict correspondence to its previous stage, making any synthesis incomplete.

Nietzsche further complicates Kant’s synthetic correspondence between intuitions and concepts, arguing that concepts result from a process of abstracting particular content from language. For Nietzsche, intuitions are produced from nerve stimuli in the form of images; these images are then transferred into sounds and words. Nietzsche argues that it is only later that these words are formed into concepts:

Every word immediately becomes a concept precisely because it is not supposed to serve as a reminder of the unique and entirely individual experience to which it owes its origin, but rather it must fit at the same time countless more or less similar cases which, strictly taken, are never equal, thus nothing but unequal. (KGW III.2, 373–74)

Concepts, then, are formed through a process of abstracting from the concrete, and universalizing the particular. Moreover, concepts considered as developmental, rather than a priori, are problematic if their principal function is the determination of sensible intuitions because Nietzsche demonstrates the possibility that concepts indirectly originate from intuitions themselves. This would suggest that cognition requires more than mere synthesis of preexisting elements; on the contrary, cognition is generative, constituted by transferences of one stage to another. As a result, neither concepts nor intuitions are ontologically prior to
the experience from which they are generated; rather intuitions originate from unique and individualized experiences, and concepts arise through the universalizing and abstracting process of language, which designates those intuitions and experiences.

**THE SOCIO-LINGUISTIC GROUND OF METAPHORIC COGNITION**

One implication of concept formation developing from language is that concepts are grounded in the community of language users, albeit in abstraction, rather than arising *a priori*. For Kant cognitions, which synthesize intuitions and concepts, are either *a priori*, that is, independent of all experience as with pure logic and mathematics; or cognitions are *a posteriori*, resulting from empirical experience. Kant is primarily interested in establishing the possibility of *a priori* cognition because it provides necessary and universal grounding: “Necessity and strict universality are therefore secure indications of an *a priori* cognition, and also belong together inseparably” (B4; 137–38). Within Nietzsche’s genealogy of concept formation, there exists no such *a priori* cognition; rather cognition is the result of a long development from linguistic production to abstraction through concepts within the socio-linguistic community. The quasi necessity and universality that stem from this community are grounded in social convention. But because the language itself that results in the formation of concepts is also the result of metaphoric transference, Nietzsche refers ironically to language use as lying: “to be truthful, i.e. to use the usual metaphors, thus expressed morally: the obligation to lie according to a fixed convention, to lie in droves in a style binding for all” (KGW III.2, 375). It is, then, language that grounds concepts, and social convention and usage that ground language, neither of which arises *a priori*, yet they have a fixed grounding in convention and obligation. What this demonstrates is the possibility of grounding language and cognition within the realm of rhetoric and *doxa*, however liminal this ground may be. While Kant requires cognition to have a universal and necessary ground *a priori*, Nietzsche indicates that although the social realm may be a space of arbitrary assignments, the demands of society provide a prescriptive adherence that approaches both necessity and universality *a posteriori*.

Nietzsche, however, accounts for Kant’s speculation concerning the possibility of *a priori* cognition with his discussion of the human capacity for forgetting, although he denies
the actuality of the *a priori*. Nietzsche describes the metaphoric processes of cognition primarily as unconscious and developmental activities: “Now, of course, the person forgets that it is so with him; he lies thus in the designated manner unconsciously and after centuries of habituation—and precisely through this unconsciousness, through this forgetting, he comes to a feeling of truth” (KGW III.2, 375). It is only by forgetting the developmental and metaphoric processes that lie at the center of cognition that metaphysicians like Kant can come to the idea of *a priori* grounds. There is one further implication that can be drawn from Nietzsche’s argument: paradoxically *a posteriori* experience is the condition of possibility for the pretense of the *a priori*. This seems to suggest that forgetting is the condition of possibility by which *a posteriori* experience is transformed into *a priori* cognition. As a result, the *a priori* is merely a specious ground which owes its justification to *a posteriori* experience. Thus, in Nietzsche’s words, “truths are illusions, about which one has forgotten that they are [illusions]” (KGW III.2, 374–75).

If, for Nietzsche, cognition is fundamentally developmental and its grounding is primarily socio-linguistic, then rationality itself is a product of these processes. Reason is the consequence of this development from intuition to concept, from the concrete toward abstraction: “He now puts his actions as a rational being under the supremacy of abstractions: he no longer suffers through the sudden impressions, becoming carried away by intuitions; he universalizes all these impressions first into colorless, cooler concepts, in order to attach to them the vehicle of his life and actions” (KGW III.2, 375). Human reason considered as developmental, particularly the movement from particular intuitions to universal concepts, further undermines Kant’s notion of a preexisting *a priori* reason. It is with respect to Kant’s schema—a process whereby sensible intuitions are made homogeneous in order to be subsumed under a concept—that Nietzsche identifies the aim of rationality (A137/B176; 271). Nietzsche interprets the schema as fundamentally an operation of conceptual dominance: “All that sets humans apart from the animal depends upon this ability to volatilize the intuitive metaphors into a schema, thus to dissolve an image in a concept” (KGW III.2, 375). What this ultimately means for Nietzsche is that the conceptual framework, with which science and philosophy proceed, is in actuality merely the “residue of a metaphor”: “the illusion of the artistic transference [Übertragung] of a nerve stimulus into images is, if not the mother, then the grandmother of every concept” (KGW III.2, 376).
PROBLEMS OF CORRESPONDENCE IN SYNTHETIC AND METAPHORIC TRUTHS

One way in which Nietzsche performs his critique of Kant’s synthesis is from an unlikely, traditionally philosophical standpoint. This position evaluates truth strictly based on the criteria of logical identity and necessary correspondence. Embodying this position not only allows Nietzsche to critique the problematic employment of synthesis in determining truth, but also to demonstrate the inadequacy of this traditional position with respect to the metaphoric ground that underpins our cognitive activities. Nietzsche performs this critique on three levels: first, through assessing inevitable consequences, which result from truths that go beyond analytic tautologies; second, through evaluating the predicament of correspondence, which proceeds from introducing language into cognitive activity, and third, through analyzing the problem of the inadequacy of perceptual faculties in relation to logical agreement.

With respect to Kant, Nietzsche plays with the difference in Kant’s distinction between analytic and synthetic judgments. Analytic judgments, according to Kant, “are thus those in which the connection of the predicate is thought through identity” of the subject. The truth that is gained through analytic judgments is one of identity; however, because the predicate adds nothing to the subject, it is also tautological. Kant’s example of an analytic judgment is the proposition “All bodies are extended,” in which the predicate of extension is itself part of the definition of body. Synthetic judgments, on the other hand, “add to the concept of the subject a predicate that was not thought in it at all, and could not have been extracted from it through any analysis.” His example of a synthetic judgment is the proposition “All bodies are heavy,” in which the predicate heavy is different from the subject body and could not be derived from the subject itself (A7/B11; 141–42). This distinction is significant to Kant because his project, in part, is to prove that cognition functions through synthetic judgments; yet these judgments are also as universal and necessary as analytic judgments. Nietzsche applies the strict criteria of truth through identity in order to demonstrate that by this definition even synthetic judgments could be evaluated as illusions: “If [a person] does not want to satisfy himself with truth in the form of tautology, i.e. with empty husks, he will perpetually trade illusions for truths” (KGW III.2, 372). What this assessment suggests is that the movement from the tautology of analytic judgments to the
predication through synthetic judgments necessarily involves illusion. One might conclude, if synthetic judgments necessarily involve illusion, then their relationship to truth is not so different from metaphor’s relationship to truth.

Additionally, Nietzsche’s introduction of language through sounds into the elements of cognition disrupts Kant’s strict pairing of intuitions and concepts. While sounds and language are by no means identical, Nietzsche uses the terms almost interchangeably when he formulates the following question and its reply: “What is a word? The illustration of a nerve stimulus in sounds” (KGW III.2, 372). It is precisely through this reproduction or transference of a nerve stimulus into words that Nietzsche argues that correspondence between language and objects is, if not impossible, at least insufficient. He further cites the subjective predicates with which we designate things, the assignment of gender to nouns, and the sheer plurality of languages in the world in order to demonstrate that our words do not correspond to a reality beyond language (KGW III.2, 372–73). The noncorrespondence between language and reality is due to the metaphoric characteristics of words that reproduce only images of the world, which are only transferences of nerve stimuli. To this point, Nietzsche argues that in our very usage of language we convince ourselves that we are speaking about an ultimate reality rather than merely symbolically and metaphorically about things: “We believe to know something about things themselves when we say trees, colors, snow, and flowers, and yet possess nothing but metaphors for things, which correspond not at all to the original entities” (KGW III.2, 373). At this stage between language and things, Nietzsche radicalizes a principal argument Kant makes in “The Transcendental Aesthetic,” where Kant claims our sensible intuitions are only of objects as they appear to us and not of things-in-themselves (A26–30 /B42–45; 159–62). Nietzsche appropriates this formulation with language and the essence of things; yet he also uses this formulation to critique the possibility of corresponding truth resulting from language. Metaphors, however, neither correspond nor contradict because they are of an entirely different order. We can say that an aspect is carried-over from one sphere to another in a metaphor; its determinacy is something we bring to it and not something in the carrying-over itself.

Nietzsche further complicates the problematic relationship of Kantian truth through correspondence, focusing the issue of noncorrespondence in our perceptual faculties. Kant’s definition of truth illustrates a formal correspondence between the subject and its object:
“What is truth? The nominal definition of truth, namely that it is the agreement of cognition with its object, is here granted and presupposed…” (A58/B82; 197). In terms of the synthesis in cognition, this means that truth is the agreement of predication through a concept with its sensible intuition. However, Kant is defining truth here in only its most formal and abstract sense and, therefore, its only significant criterion is that it does not contradict itself: “But these criteria concern only the form of truth, i.e., of thinking in general, and are to that extent entirely correct but not sufficient. For although a cognition may be in complete accord with logical form, i.e., not contradict itself, yet it can still always contradict the object” (A59/B84; 198). While Kant attempts to demonstrate that the logical form of truth is universal and necessary—although ultimately insufficient with respect to an actual object—Nietzsche presses Kant on the very issue of sufficiency.

Nietzsche seems to argue that sufficiency is a more essential criterion, even though his and Kant’s sensible processes lack direct intuition of things-in-themselves. Nietzsche claims that in order for there to be any meaningful agreement between our cognition and its object, it would presume that we have correct perception of objects:

In general, however, correct perception—which would mean the adequate expression of an object in the subject—seems to me a contradictory absurdity: for between two absolutely different spheres, as between subject and object, there is no causality, no correctness, no expression, but rather at most an aesthetic behavior; I mean a suggestive transference [Übertragung], a stammering translation in a completely foreign language. (KGW III 2, 378)

What Nietzsche suggests in this passage is that because our perception is based on metaphoric transferences—on aesthetic behavior—any expression of an object in the subject would consequently be inadequate, and Kant’s formulation of cognition’s agreement with its object would likewise be absurd. Nietzsche stresses within this transference and translation of a nerve stimulus into intuitive metaphor that there is no causal relation to secure the correctness of perception or adequacy of expression. Nietzsche’s assessment of our incapacity to perceive objects as they actually are, or as things-in-themselves, echoes Kant’s formulation from the “Transcendental Aesthetic.” However, Nietzsche’s privileging of sufficiency, and its impossibility, over the universal and the necessary allows him to undermine the logical criteria of truth. Further, it demonstrates that if cognition is
understood as purely logical operations, yet still cannot attain sufficient truth, it is because these processes are merely abstractions of more primarily metaphoric relations.

**PERFORMATIVE CRITIQUE OF DETERMINATE TRUTH**

The relation of metaphor to Kant’s theory of cognition takes an additional performative turn in Nietzsche beyond appropriation and critique. In his notebooks, Nietzsche argues that cognition, as traditionally understood, is dependent upon metaphor, yet disregards the metaphoric process that is essential to its activity:

Imitating is the opposite of cognizing in that cognizing wants to accept exactly no transference [*Übertragung*]; rather it wants to hold onto the impression without metaphor and without consequences. . . . But now there are no “real” expressions and no real cognizing without metaphor. . . . Cognizing is only one work in the most popular metaphors, thus an imitation no longer sensed as imitating. It cannot thus naturally penetrate in the kingdom of truth. (KSA 7, 19[228], 490–91)

It is within this framework that Nietzsche suggests that Kantian cognition cannot sufficiently apprehend truth, not only because metaphoric transference is inherent in Kantian synthesis, but also because synthesis is precisely a self-denying metaphor—a metaphor that believes it has overcome difference through synthetic identity. The problem for Kant is that difference reappears in the individual and concrete, but retreat into abstraction provides a cover where synthesis appears to have resolved its contradiction.

If truth for Kant is the agreement of the subject (an object of the senses) with cognition (the predication through concepts), then object determination is fundamentally an operation of synthesizing concepts with intuitions. Synthesis is a function of the faculty of the understanding, which thinks an object through concepts in a judgment:

We can, however, trace all actions of the understanding back to judgments, so that the understanding in general can be represented as a faculty for judging. For according to what has been said above it is the faculty of thinking. Thinking is cognition through concepts. Concepts, however, as predicates of possible judgments, are related to some representation of a still undetermined object. (A69/B94; 205)

Here, concepts are primarily what determine an object in general. For Kant, this is a purely formal connection where both concepts and objects are considered solely in their abstract, yet this makes possible their constitutive relation. The undetermined object, which can only be determined through conceptual predication, is an object in general or a transcendental object.
Kant expresses the transcendental object in the formal equation as “something in general = X” (A104; 231). It is clear to see that Kant is working out the problems of object determination in an essentially formal and abstract manner, where a concept, which is itself merely a universal abstraction, determines an equally generalized object. It is at this level of generalization that Nietzsche questions the sufficiency of these determinations.

In “On Truth and Lie,” Nietzsche plays with Kant’s central notion of determinate truth through conceptual predication, demonstrating the insufficiency of the resulting truth through his metaphoric appropriation of Kant’s cognitive processes. In order to better understand this insufficiency, we must first locate the specific operation of metaphor with which Nietzsche critiques Kant’s determinative function of cognition. A clue to this operation is found in Nietzsche’s seventh lecture on rhetoric, “The Tropical Expression,” where he quotes Aristotle’s definition of metaphor from the Poetics: “a metaphor is the carrying-over [Übertragung] of a word whose usual meaning is another, either from the genus to the species, from the species to the genus, from species to species, or according to proportion” (KGW II.4, 444). Of these four performative operations of metaphor, Nietzsche specifically calls into doubt Kant’s attempt to produce determinate truth from the transference of genus to species.

The central problem for Nietzsche with conceptual determination is that it is merely in the abstract and cannot distinguish difference in actuality: “Every concept originates through the equation of unequals” (KGW III.2, 374). This description resembles the transference that is basic to metaphor; however, on the conceptual level it attempts to resolve difference through abstraction:

The overlooking of the individual and actual gives us the concept, and also gives us the form, whereas nature gives no forms and concepts, thus also is acquainted with no genus, rather only gives to us an inaccessible and indefinable X. For also our opposition of individual and genus is anthropomorphic and does not stem from the essence of things. (KGW III.2, 374)

The fundamental critique here is that the movement into abstraction cannot reproduce the individual and actual. Cognition, for Nietzsche, if it is to make truth claims, must be able apprehend the essence of things. While he makes clear that our metaphoric cognitive processes cannot accomplish this feat, Kant’s conceptual determinations do, although primarily formally. Nietzsche equally pushes Kant’s claims of the transcendental ideality of
our intellectual concepts and sensible forms to the conclusion that because they originate in human cognition and not from nature itself, they can only explain our relation to the world through our own invented designations and classifications, and not the world itself.

Nietzsche’s critical performance of Kantian determinate cognition through concepts is best illustrated in his play on the attempt to determine a species through its genus:

When someone hides a thing behind a bush and seeks precisely there again and finds also it, there is not much to praise in this seeking and finding; but so it stands with the seeking and finding of “truth” within the region of reason. If I make up the definition of the mammal and then declare after inspecting a camel, “See, a mammal,” so with it a truth is brought to light, but it is of limited worth. (KGW III, 377)

This example demonstrates the problematic nature of determining a particular through greater generality as well as Kant’s own criteria that judgments should be universal and necessary. What can be said about the world in strict universality and necessity is very limited indeed; it can only offer modified tautologies and minor transferences if it is not to contradict itself.
CHAPTER 6
METONYMY, CAUSALITY, AND SYNTHETIC JUDGMENTS

In “On Truth and Lie,” the trope of metonymy is only explicitly mentioned twice, although its performative aspects are present throughout Nietzsche’s argument (KGW III.2, 374; 381). And like the trope of metaphor, there is little by way of definition of this trope in this essay. In Nietzsche’s lecture “Relation of the Rhetorical to Language,” he defines metonymy as the “exchanges [Vertauschungen] of cause and effect” (KGW II.4, 427). The performative term, here, is exchange, which acquires a particular significance to Kantian philosophy with respect to causal relations. The problem of causality is central to Kant’s transcendental project and is related to his principal criticism of Hume. Kant rejects the empiricist’s attempt “to derive [causality] from a frequent association of that which happens with that which precedes and a habit (thus a merely subjective necessity) of connecting representations arising from that association” (B5; 138). It is the association of habit, without objective necessity and universality, which leads Hume to skepticism—skepticism that Kant desires to overcome. Rather than causal relations arising from habit, Kant argues that causality is an a priori concept, which humans bring to experience and is a condition of its possibility: “Therefore it is only because we subject the sequence of the appearances and thus all alteration to the law of causality that experience itself, i.e., empirical cognition of them, is possible; consequently they themselves, as objects of experience, are possible only in accordance with this law” (B234; 305). One consequence of the transcendental ideality of the concept of causality is that it is subject dependent; and as subject dependent, it is the necessary and universal condition with which we order our experiences.

Nietzsche extends his definition of metonymy in his notebooks, in which he connects the exchange in causal relations to the process of conceptual abstraction: “The abstractions are metonymies, i.e. exchanges [Vertauschungen] of cause and effect. But now every
concept is a metonymy and cognizing happens in concepts. ‘Truth’ becomes a power when we first detached it as abstraction” (KSA 7, 19[204], 481–82). This expanded definition not only emphasizes the problem of causality, it also suggests that metonymy is essential to cognitive processes. If metaphor demonstrates that the transference and carrying-over, which are essential to the synthesis between intuitions and concepts, result in a noncorrespondence between the cognition and its object, then the process of metonymic exchange discloses how cognition presupposes objective determination through abstracting content from intuitions and subsuming them under the subsequent concept. While determinate truth, which follows this process, is not any more stable than the original transferences, this exchange creates the appearance that this unconscious a posteriori operation is firmly grounded a priori.

METONYMY AND CAUSALITY

Nietzsche seems to appropriate Kant’s anti-Humean position that mere empirical association cannot account for the idea of causal relations. Kant claims in the “Transcendental Analytic” that experience alone cannot sufficiently ground causality as universal and necessary. He argues that the empiricist position “that experience constantly offers examples of a regularity of appearances that give sufficient occasion for abstracting the concept of cause from them” is false. Rather, he concludes, “the concept of cause cannot arise in this way at all, but must either be grounded in the understanding completely a priori or else be entirely surrendered as a mere fantasy of the brain” (A91/B123; 223). Nietzsche furthers Kant’s anti-empiricist position with multiple claims that reject the inference of causality. He echoes Kant’s assertions regarding the relationship between the thing-in-itself and our form of sensibility with the claim that “to further conclude from the nerve stimulus to a cause outside of us is already the result of a false and unwarranted application of the principle of sufficient reason” (KGW III.2, 372).

However, Nietzsche also departs more radically from the anti-empiricist position, going beyond even Kantian criteria. This is illustrated in Nietzsche’s genealogical account, which undermines a priori grounding as universal and necessary: “The relationship itself of a nerve stimulus to the produced image is not a necessary one.” He argues, rather, that this relationship is the result of a developmental process in which the image is generated millions of times over many generations: “so it receives finally the same meaning for humans as if it
was the sole necessary image and as if this relationship of the original nerve stimulus to the created image was a strictly causal relationship” (KGW III.2, 378). It seems that Nietzsche agrees with the Kantian perspective that it is we who posit the concept of causality; however, this positing of causality is not *a priori*, but an *ex post facto* explanation from effects instead of causes. Nietzsche, again, reinforces his radicalized position, implying that Kantian synthesis between cognition and its object is more complicated than Kant demonstrates. This is emphasized when Nietzsche argues, “between subject and object, there is no causality, no correctness, and no expression” (KGW III.2, 378). It is here that Nietzsche’s position reflects a critique of the synthetic relationship between cause and effect held by Kant, and begins to suggest the tropological relationship of metonymy.

Nietzsche’s turn toward a metonymic critique of Kantian synthesis and *a priori* grounding begins in his genealogy, where he locates an alternative origin of the concept of causality. While Nietzsche does seem to agree with Kant that we cannot infer causes from experience, we are, however, acquainted with consequences and effects in our empirical experience. Nietzsche argues that the fundamental motivation of the human intellect is not the rational understanding or pure cognition of the world of objects, but rather it is a “means for preserving the individual” (KGW III.2, 370). In order to maintain self-preservation, humans enter into social relations whereby they overcome “the crudest bellum omnium contra omnes [war of all against all]” (KGW III.2, 371). Nietzsche argues that within society, the motivation to preserve not only the individual, but also the social order on which the individual depends creates normative laws. It is ultimately the motivation for preservation that grounds these laws, and that it is the harmful consequences of transgression rather than transgression itself that disrupts the social order and puts preservation at risk.

This shift in emphasis from determining cause to analyzing consequence is best illustrated in Nietzsche’s example of the liar: “The liar uses the valid designations, the words, in order to make the inactual appear as actual. … He misuses the fixed conventions through arbitrary exchanges [Vertauschungen] or even reversals of names” (KGW III.2, 371–72). It is noteworthy, here, to point out that the performative activity that defines the liar closely resembles that of metonymy. However, as Nietzsche is quick to demonstrate, it is not the metonymic activity of the liar that defines him, but rather the harmful consequences that his exchanges effect: “Humans flee not so much from becoming deceived, than from becoming
harmed through deception. They also hate at this stage fundamentally not the illusion, but rather the terrible, hostile consequences of certain types of illusions” (KGW III 2, 372). It is, then, the continuous empirical association of harmful consequences with particular types of actions that first stimulates the desire for causal understanding. Nietzsche argues that the desire for truth originates from the association of consequences with actions as well: “In a similarly restricted sense, a person also wants only the truth. He desires the pleasant, life-preserving consequences of truth; toward pure inconsequential cognition he is indifferent, and toward perhaps harmful and destructive truths he is even hostile” (KGW III 2, 372).

From this perspective, truth is determined by its consequences and grounded in its life-harming or preserving effects. Causation is only an extension and abstraction from the original association between consequences and actions. Within Nietzsche’s genealogical account of causality, he criticizes Kant’s principal claim that causal relations must be grounded in *a priori* concepts, that is, in pure cognition. Nietzsche implies that such as grounding is inconsequential primarily because *a priori* claims overlook the human desire to create causality from actual empirical experience.

The implication that causes are fundamentally inferred metonymically from their effects problematizes Kant’s *a priori* position. Kant argues against empirical association as the ground for causal relations because experience does not provide universal and necessary laws: “Thus to the synthesis of cause and effect there attaches dignity that can never be expressed empirically, namely, that the effect does not merely come along with a cause, but is posited through it and follows from it” (A91/B124; 223). Metonymy for Nietzsche reverses Kant’s formulation, suggesting that the cause does not merely come along with the effect; rather the cause is posited through the effect and paradoxically follows from it—the cause is a consequence of the effect. It is not a question of false causation, but rather the desire to attribute to a harmful or pleasant consequence an efficient cause in order to avoid or repeat it respectively. Nietzsche’s analysis implies the claim that *a posteriori* experience of consequences creates the need and desire for a fictionalized *a priori* cause.

Nietzsche clarifies this line of reasoning in his notebooks:

The synthetic judgment describes a thing after its consequences, i.e. essence and consequences become identified, i.e. a metonymy. Thus in the essence of synthetic judgments lies a metonymy, i.e. it is a false equation, i.e. the synthetic
inferences are illogical. When we apply them, we presuppose the popular metaphysics, i.e. that which considers effects as causes. (KSA 7, 19[242], 495)

The positing in advance of a popular metaphysics is precisely Kant’s method of inquiry, arguing that *a priori* synthetic judgments are the condition of possibility for empirical experience: “Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problem of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to cognition… which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us” (Bxvi; 110). What Nietzsche critiques in Kant’s formulation is that this assumption requires the identification, or synthesis, between the essence of the object and the concept, even though the concept does not conform to the object in its actuality and, moreover, the concept is merely the consequence of metaphoric abstraction from the sensible. It is actually the metonymic exchange of positing the concept as the essence of the object that provides Kantian metaphysics with the mere semblance of universality and necessity.

**Metonymy and Synthetic Judgments**

Kant’s strict separation of intuitions and concepts in synthetic judgments suggests an acknowledgement of a possible metonymic exchange in their functions. Although Kant is principally concerned with demonstrating that sensibility cannot think and the understanding cannot intuit, his separation and then synthesis of these functions opens up critical possibilities and implications: “It is thus just as necessary to make the mind’s concepts sensible… as it is to make its intuitions understandable. Further, these two faculties or capacities cannot exchange [vertauschen] their functions. … Only from their unification can cognition arise” (A51/B75; 194). Nietzsche, however, understands the unification that takes place in cognition as fundamentally a metonymic exchange. This is not because concepts are sensible or intuitions are thoughts, but because neither concepts nor intuitions arise *a priori*; rather concepts develop out of the sensible through a process of abstraction. In the lecture “The Tropical Expression,” Nietzsche clarifies how even *a posteriori* processes become associated as *a priori*:

> These concepts, which owe their origin merely to our sensation, become presupposed as the inner essence of things: we push under the appearances as ground what is yet only a consequence. The abstractions give rise to the illusion that they are those essences, which bring about the properties, while they receive
figurative existence from us only in consequence of those properties. (KSW II.4, 446)

Again, Nietzsche suggests that the presupposition of metaphysics fundamentally associates concepts with the determinate essence of objects, while concepts themselves simply, although through a complex process, are the consequence of sensible intuitions in an abstracted form. Concepts in the form of abstractions, then, are presumed as an \textit{a priori} ground or condition of possibility for the sensible properties of an object themselves. Thus, the determination granted in the synthetic judgments is only possible through a metonymic exchange.

While Kant concedes that “general logic abstracts from all content of cognition, and expects representations will be given to it… in order for it to transform them into concepts analytically,” yet he also insists that the “[t]ranscendental logic, on the contrary, has a manifold of sensibility that lies before it \textit{a priori} . . . in order to provide the pure concepts of the understanding with a matter, without which they would be without any content, thus completely empty” (A76–77/B102; 210). Nietzsche, however, undermines the \textit{a priori} status of both intuitions and concepts with his genealogy, leaving Kant with general rather than transcendental logic. The first stage in Nietzsche’s metonymic critique and performance of Kant’s synthetic judgments is similar to his metaphoric critique in which particular intuitions are abstracted into concepts through the process of synthesis. This operation of abstraction leads Nietzsche to argue, “So certainly a leaf is never entirely the same as another; as certainly the concept leaf is formed through the arbitrary dropping of these individual differences, through a forgetting of the distinctions, and only the representation \textit{[Verstellung]} is resurrected” (KGW III.2, 374). Nietzsche claims that concepts originate from a process of abstracting from the particular and forgetting difference, which resembles the synthesis of intuition in the first \textit{Critique}. Nietzsche suggests that synthesis is merely a form transference that combines and unifies while omitting difference. The result of synthesizing contingent and individual properties of an object is the representation. This process is ultimately analogous to Kant’s schematization of the sensible: “In all subsumptions of an object under a concept the representations of the former must be homogeneous with the latter” (A137/B176; 271). But instead of representations and concepts becoming
schematized in the Kantian sense, Nietzsche argues that it is intuitions that are made
homogeneous, resulting in a representation, which in turn becomes a concept.

The second stage in the metonymic process takes place in the subsumption of the
particular under the concept, where the concept, which is the abstract consequence of the
sensible intuition, exchanges its position as the effect for the position of determinate cause.
This operation is further illuminated in Nietzsche’s example of the concept of leaf, in which
he argues the concept is posited as the ground and essence of actual leaves:

As if there was something in nature in addition to leaves—the ‘leaf,’ for instance,
would be an original form after which all leaves were woven, marked, measured,
colored, gathered, painted, but from careless hands, so that no exemplar would
turn out as correct and reliable as the faithful portrayal of the original form. …
This means again: the leaf is the cause of the leaves (KGW III 2, 374).

This process of abstract determination of an object not only relies on a metonymic exchange,
but it also generates the notion of metaphysics itself. The concept as an abstraction becomes
the standard with which to judge not only cognition, but also reality. The genus of leaf is one
in which the species of leaves is compared, and yet cannot completely correspond. For
synthesis between the sensible and the intellectual realms to take place, Kant chooses in
favor of the intellectual at the expense of the sensible. In contrast, Nietzsche resolves this
antinomy by arguing that the intellectual develops out of the sensible through a process of
transferences and exchanges, whereby he privileges the sensible at the expense of the
intellectual.

This critique of the metaphysical position inherent in synthetic judgments is further
illustrated in Nietzsche’s notebooks: “The ‘is’ in the synthetic judgment is false, it contains a
carrying-over [Übertragung], two different spheres become put next to one another; between
them an equation can never take place” (KSA 7, 19[242], 495–96). In “On Truth and Lie,”
Nietzsche suggests that even the realm of ethics, which would presumably result from the a
posteriori experience of social relations, is influenced by the false and abstract determinacy
of metonymic exchange:

We call a person honest: we ask, why had he acted so honestly today? Our
answer usually is because of his honesty. . . . We know nothing of a essential
quality which is called honesty, but of numerous individualized, therefore,
unequal actions, which we equate through leaving out the dissimilarities and now
designate as honest actions. In the end, we formulate from them a qualitas
occulta with the name honesty. (KGW III 2, 374)
The proposition “someone is honest” relies on a determinate concept of honesty, which in fact is only the carrying-over of “numerous, individualized,” and “dissimilar actions” onto the concept honesty. Not only is this proposition analytic, and therefore, tautological, but its abstract determinacy says nothing of what the essence of honesty actually is. Furthermore, this form of abstract determinacy creates a metaphysical standard in which there is some idealized honesty, yet because it cannot account for the numerous different actions within its synthesis, the concept honesty cannot correspond to actual actions. The idealized and abstracted concept of honesty becomes the *a priori*, yet inconsequential, ground for action, rather than Nietzsche’s more fundamental ground of pleasant, life-preserving consequences. These metonymic exchanges of the cause for consequence, the abstract for the concrete, and the universal for the particular, merely produce the semblance of truth rather than a determinate actuality. Yet, as Nietzsche argues in his notebooks, it is only the movement away from the consequence, the concrete, and the particular that produces the illusion of truth: “‘Truth’ becomes a power when we first detached it as abstraction” (KSA 7, 19[204], 482).
CHAPTER 7

ANTHROPOMORPHISM AND
TRANSCENDENTAL IDEALITY

The trope anthropomorphism taken from Nietzsche’s definition of truth is, perhaps, an unlikely companion to the more familiar tropes of metaphor and metonymy. In Nietzsche’s lecture “Relation of the Rhetorical to Language,” he lists metaphor, metonymy, and synecdoche as the three principal tropes. Moreover, Nietzsche does not mention or define anthropomorphism in his lecture notes. At first glance, anthropomorphism’s position amongst the other two tropes seems out of place. However, if we consider anthropomorphism as a modification of synecdoche, or perhaps, a particular species of the latter, then its placement is not at all peculiar. Furthermore, as will be discussed below, Nietzsche’s choice of terminology with respect to this trope reflects a specifically Kantian influence.

In order to understand Nietzsche’s use of the term anthropomorphism, we must briefly turn to his definition of synecdoche. In his lecture “The Tropical Expression,” he seems content with the general definition of synecdoche as a substitution of a part for a whole. However, he also describes the trope in terms specific to language: “Language never expresses something completely, rather emphasizes overall only the most striking characteristic” (KGW II.4, 445). This assertion suggests that our language itself is synecdochically constructed and limited. Even more significant, Nietzsche depicts this trope with particular consideration to cognition in the lecture “Relation of the Rhetorical to Language”: “A one-sided perception steps in for the whole and full intuition” (KGW II.4, 426). This indicates that not only are we linguistically constrained, expressing only partially what we attempt to convey fully, but also our sensible faculties of cognition are likewise limited, sensing merely a fraction of something while assuming it is the sum. In “On Truth and Lie,” Nietzsche argues that there is a parallel operation involved in the inquiry into truth:
“The investigator of such truths seeks fundamentally only the metamorphosis of the world into the human; he wrestles after an understanding of the world as a human-type thing and secures for himself in the best case a feeling of assimilation.” The trope of anthropomorphism, then, is a form of synecdoche in which the world as a whole is described, perceived and understood from the human perspective, and from this perspective the world can never be characterized, sensed, or cognized as it is in itself—it contains both the possibilities and limitations of human epistemology. This is why Nietzsche claims that truth “is anthropomorphic through and through, and contains no single point which would be ‘true in itself,’ actual, and universally valid apart from humans” (KGW III.2, 377). However tautological or controversial this position may seem, it is one that is influenced primarily by Kant’s transcendental idealism.

**NIETZSCHE’S COPERNICAN TURN**

Nietzsche’s trope of anthropomorphism performs a synecdochic operation in which the empirical world is metamorphosed and assimilated, determining in judgments the whole of reality from the limited and partial human standpoint. This position shares a direct affinity with Kant’s transcendental perspective in which he interprets Copernicus’s revaluation of geocentrism as a comparable methodology to his own. Paul Guyer and Allen Wood cite Kant’s Copernican analogy as framing his transcendental argument: “it is here that Kant introduces the famous comparison between his own anthropocentric procedure in philosophy and Copernicus’s heliocentric revolution in astronomy” (70). The “anthropocentric procedure” that Kant proposes against the empiricism of Hume is precisely what Nietzsche appropriates and transforms into the trope of anthropomorphism. Kant describes his Copernican insight in the following manner: “Up to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects… let us try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition…” (Bxvi, 110). There is a certain disjunction in Kant’s analogy between his anthropocentricism and Copernicus’s heliocentrism; as Diane Davis points out, Freud listed Copernicus’s discovery as one of three “devastating blows to human pride,” “decentering man’s presumed cosmological place in the universe as ‘lord of the world’” (88).
This disjunction notwithstanding, Kant reestablishes an anthropocentric relation to the world out of the devastation wreaked by a heliocentric model. He explains his analogy thusly: “Copernicus, who, when he did not make good progress in the explanation of the celestial motions if he assumed that the entire celestial host revolves around the observer, tried to see if he might not have greater success if he made the observer revolve and left the stars at rest” (Bxvi, 110). Kant’s insistence that objects must conform to our form of cognition regrounds an interpretation of the universe from the human perspective, which consequentially suggests a peculiar mind-dependency of reality.

In “On Truth and Lie,” Nietzsche begins with a fable that indirectly appropriates and critiques Kant’s Copernican revaluation. His fable creates an implicit analogy between Copernicus (and by extension Kant) and clever beasts who invent cognition in which its only significance is for its inventors:

In some remote corner of the universe in which countless flickering solar systems poured out, there once was a constellation on which clever animals invented cognition [Erkennen]. That was the most arrogant and most mendacious minute of ‘world history’: but still only a minute. After a few breathes from nature, the constellation solidified and the clever animals had to die. (KGW III.2, 369)

The emphasis on mortality reinforces Nietzsche’s claim that our cognitions are only “true” with respect to their dependency on our human perspective and, therefore, they are in no way universally valid from the perspective of an indifferent universe.

Nietzsche furthers this claim with respect to his fable in his comment on the anthropomorphic drive of the human intellect: “For there is no further mission for this intellect which goes beyond human life. Rather it is human, and only its possessor and producer takes it so passionately, as if the hinge of the world revolved in it” (KGW III.2, 369). This remark has a dual implication regarding Nietzsche’s own subject-centered position. First, whereas Kant argues in the preface to the first edition that human reason is driven to answer questions that “transcend every capacity of human reason,” Nietzsche suggests that the intellect’s drive never attempts transcendence but merely assimilation (Avii; 99). Second, this act of assimilation is demonstrated in Kant’s Copernican, subject-centered analogy in which Kant argues, “objects must conform to our cognition,” to which Nietzsche obliquely responds, “as if the hinge of the world revolved in it.”
Kant’s anthropocentric influence on his successor is exemplified in the Nietzsche’s initial appropriation and then subsequent critique of the Kantian term thing-in-itself.\textsuperscript{18} Kantian metaphysics depends on the distinction between objects as appearance and objects as things-in-themselves. He argues that the absolute limit in our cognition is that we cannot know the thing-in-itself; rather, we only cognize the appearance of the object: “we can have cognition of no object as a thing in itself, but only insofar as it is an object of sensible intuition, i.e. as an appearance” (Bxxvi; 115). This distinction between objects of intuition as appearance and objects as things-in-themselves is connected to another Kantian distinction between phenomena and noumena: “Appearances, to the extent that as objects they are thought in accordance with the unity of the categories, are called \textit{phaenomena}” (A 249; 347). Noumena, on the other hand, are concepts with no corresponding appearance, i.e. God, freedom, and immortality (A3/B7; 139): “The concept of a \textit{noumenon}, i.e., of a thing that is not to be thought of as an object of the senses but rather as a thing in itself (solely through a pure understanding)” (A254/B310; 350). Noumena are thoughts of pure speculative reason and are not determinate in the way cognition regards phenomena; in fact, Kant argues that treating noumena as phenomena creates the antinomies of reason in which “Human reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss … but which it also cannot answer” (Avii; 99). This antinomy occurs when we apply the categories or concepts of the understanding to noumena like God, freedom, and the soul, rather than restrict their use to sensible phenomena.

Nietzsche accepts the epistemological limit of the thing-in-itself; however, he rejects the idea that we might have a cognitive interest in things-in-themselves as noumena. This sentiment is first expressed in Nietzsche’s claim that “there is no further mission for this

\textsuperscript{18} Hill confirms Nietzsche’s Kantian use of the thing-in-itself: “To be sure, Nietzsche is not simply reiterating Schopenhauer even here; he carefully eschews any suggestion that one can identify the thing-in-itself with the will” (174).
intellect which goes beyond human life” (KGW III.2, 369). Similarly, Nietzsche transforms Kant’s distinction between noumena and phenomena into an opposition between things-in-themselves and anthropomorphisms: “The ‘thing-in-itself’ (which would be just the pure inconsequential truth) is also entirely incomprehensible to the creator of language, and not at all worthwhile. He designates only the relations of things to humans and takes for their expression the help of the boldest metaphors” (KGW III.2, 373). At the linguistic level, our use of language only expresses anthropomorphisms because we invent designations that only reflect our human relationship to the things. The thing-in-itself does not only represent a world divorced from our sensation and cognition, but also from our linguistic capacities and interests. Nietzsche argues that at bottom our intellect desires life-preserving consequences, and that objects, noumena, or the world apart from these consequences would hold absolutely no interest for human beings; thus, by definition the thing-in-itself is incomprehensible and also inconsequential as a form of truth. In one sense, the thing-in-itself is merely a heuristic metaphor for Nietzsche, the hypothetical opposing term to the all-encompassing relational trope of anthropomorphism. Nietzsche only employs the term in order to demonstrate the human limitations of perception, language, and cognition, and seems to in no way endorse an actual metaphysical truth beyond our capacities.

Nietzsche further transforms the Kantian opposition of things-in-themselves and appearances in his rejection of the term appearance [Erscheinung]: “The word appearance contains many seductions, which is why I possibly avoid it: for it is not true that the essence of things appears [erscheint] in the empirical world” (KGW III.2, 378). While Kant claims that we do not know the thing-in-itself but only its appearance, Nietzsche radicalizes this limitation with the claim that we do not even know its appearance. He plays with term appearance, arguing that in order for the word to be appropriate to our cognitive abilities it would have to have some correspondence to the actual thing appearing. In this way, Nietzsche claims that not only do we not know the thing-in-itself, but we also do not know its appearance. Rather we only know anthropomorphic metaphors for things.

Furthermore, Nietzsche implies that the empirical world, as opposed to a metaphysical noumenal world, is identical to the anthropomorphic world: “the entire empirical world, i.e. the anthropomorphic world assigned in it” (KGW III.2, 380). This identity suggests a complete rejection both of Kant’s metaphysical oppositions between
things-in-themselves and appearances as well as of phenomena and noumena. Nietzsche’s identity between the empirical and anthropomorphic leads him to the further rejection of noumena and things-in-themselves as having independent existence: “[The investigator-of-truths’] method is to hold humans as the measure of all things; but he starts out from the mistake in believing he has these things before him immediately as pure objects [reine Objekte]. Therefore, he forgets the original metaphoric intuitions [Anschauungsmetaphern] are metaphors and takes them as the things themselves” (KGW III.2, 377). Nietzsche’s appropriation and critique of Kant’s anthropocentricism suggests while we may make cognitive judgments in regard to things, we never actually have these things on which to judge. Further, if our judgments were based on the appearances of objects and not on the things-in-themselves, then even these “appearances” are merely transferences from stimuli, metaphoric intuitions, and do not correspond to the essences of the objects. Even our anthropomorphic comparisons are anthropomorphic—they are ultimately the comparison of the human with the human. If noumena are invented, then appearances too are a human invention.

Nietzsche radicalizes this limitation with anthropomorphism, where human knowledge’s only recourse is to ground itself upon itself. The unknowability of the thing-in-itself does not mean that there exists an independent world as truth; rather our anthropomorphism of the world means we can only know the world in human terms and through our human capacities. The distinction between the anthropomorphic world and the noumenal world for Nietzsche merely demonstrates that we are incapable of knowing beyond human cognition—that truths are only human truths from our human perspective.

**Anthropomorphism and the Transcendental Ideality of Time and Space**

Kant’s own anthropomorphic claims are best exemplified early in the first Critique in his discussion of space and time as *a priori* forms of intuition. In the “Transcendental Aesthetic,” Kant claims that both space and time are dependent on human subjectivity and are not properties of things-in-themselves: “We can accordingly speak of space, extended beings, and so on, only from the human standpoint. If we depart from the subjective condition under which alone we can acquire outer intuition, namely that through which we
may be affected by objects, then the representation of space signifies nothing at all” (A26/B42; 177). Kant’s assertion that the concept of space is primarily dependent on human sensibility rather than something existing independent of cognition is echoed with his discussion of time: “Time is therefore merely a subjective condition of our (human) intuition (which is always sensible, i.e., insofar as we are affected by objects), and in itself, outside the subject, is nothing” (A35/B51; 181). That Kant insists that both space and time are “transcendentally ideal” as forms of a priori intuitions, yet “empirically real” as the conditions of possible experience, reflects a peculiar type of anthropocentrism that rejects the empiricism and dogmatic idealism of his predecessors (A28/B44; 177).19

In “On Truth and Lie,” Nietzsche seems to accept the subject dependency of both space and time in his most direct allusion to Kant’s transcendental idealism: “But everything wonderful that we build up especially in these laws of nature, which could have supported our explanation and seduced us into mistrust toward this idealism, lies especially and entirely alone only in the mathematical strictness and steadfastness of time and space representations” (KGW III.2, 379). For Nietzsche, the subject dependency of space and time suggests a vicious circle that anthropomorphic claims entail when they are applied to the world: “But we produce these in us and out of us with the necessity with which the spider spins; if we are forced to conceptualize all things only under these forms, so it is then no longer wonderful that we conceptualize in all things actually only just these forms” (KGW III.2, 379–80). Nietzsche further explains that since space and time arise from us, their application is merely an anthropomorphism of laws of nature: “All moderation of law, which so impresses us in the course of the stars and in the chemical process, coincides fundamentally with those properties which we ourselves bring over to things, so that we impress ourselves with them” (KGW III.2, 380). The circular problem for Nietzsche is that what we actually know about the world is that with which we bring to it—our knowledge both begins and ends with anthropomorphism.

19 Most notable among the empiricists are Hume and Locke, and among the idealists are Descartes and Berkeley.
For all of Nietzsche’s acceptance and critique of transcendental idealism, he still insists that these forms of intuition are neither a priori nor purely logical; rather, in his notebooks he grounds these forms of sensibility in the metaphoric transference of bodily sensation: “The image in the eye is decisive for our cognizing, then the rhythm of our hearing. From the eye we would never arrive at representations of time, from the ear never representations of space. The feeling of touch corresponds to causal-sensation” (KSA 7, 19[217], 487). Ultimately space and time, and even causality, are metaphoric transferences from nerve stimuli and grounded in embodiment. How they arise through their sensuous transference reinforces their anthropomorphic origin on a more primordial level than mere condition of possibility. In “On Truth and Lie,” Nietzsche argues that the apparent a priori origin of the forms of space and time merely demonstrates their forgotten metaphoric genesis:

With this it certainly follows that the artistic metaphor-formation with which each sensation begins in us already presupposes those forms, thus becomes carried out in them. Only out of the fixed persistence of these original forms explains the possibility how afterwards a structure of concepts should have become constructed again out of the metaphors themselves. This is namely an imitation of time, space, and number relations on the ground of the metaphors. (KGW III2, 380)

Kant argues that space and time, as pure forms of sensibility, are the condition of possibility with which experience is grounded (A42–49/B59–66; 168–71). Nietzsche plays on this notion of ultimate ground, making metaphor itself the condition of possibility in which these forms of space and time are grounded. This, of course, means that metaphor is prior to and constitutive of these forms through our human sensible, linguistic, and social development—all of which are themselves constituted through metaphoric transferences, metonymic exchanges, and anthropomorphic assimilations.

**The Limitation of Anthropomorphic Knowledge**

In his notebooks, Nietzsche acknowledges the tension that his appropriation of Kant’s anthropocentric standpoint entails: “It is to be proven that all constructions of the world are anthropomorphisms: really all sciences, if Kant is right. Of course, there is here a circular inference—if the sciences are right, then we are not standing on Kant’s fundamental ground; if Kant is right, then the sciences are wrong” (KSA 7, 19[125], 459). Nietzsche realizes that
there is a tension between Kant’s claim that metaphysics is grounded \textit{a priori}, hence anthropomorphically, and his claim that such a grounding secures the path of all sciences (B22–24; 148; Bxviii; 111).\textsuperscript{20} This is because science treats the empirical world as constituted from universal and necessary laws that are independent of human cognition—what Maudemarie Clark calls metaphysical realism: “the doctrine that reality is something-in-itself, that its nature is determinately constituted independently of us” (40–41). Against metaphysical realism, Nietzsche seems to agree with Kant that these forms are merely anthropomorphic structures; in which case, not only is science wrong, but these structures also cannot yield actual knowledge of the world independently from them. Yet Nietzsche radicalizes his position against metaphysical realism in his defense of Kant: “Against Kant, it is then still always objected that with all of his propositions admitted, there still remains the full possibility that the world is thus how it appears to us. Personally, by the way, this entire position is useless. No one can live in this skepticism” (KSA 7, 19[125], 459).\textsuperscript{21} What is significant about this passage is that it reverses the common form of Cartesian skepticism that results from metaphysical realism, as Clark describes, “that a theory that best satisfies our cognitive interests might still be false” (61). Nietzsche’s defense of Kant is an ironic play on this skeptical argument, exchanging Descartes’ position with its positive counterpart that claims a theory that satisfies our cognitive interest might also be true.

While I would not hazard to guess if Kant would agree with Nietzsche’s defense, Nietzsche seems to argue that skepticism still results from this position because it maintains a correspondence between appearance and thing-in-itself that is impossible given our linguistic, sensible, and cognitive limitations. Even though such a position seems to resolve

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} Breazeale identifies a similar tension in Nietzsche’s theory of language: “‘Realistically’ considered, language may be treated as one more phenomenon or activity which forms a part of our experienced world and about which we can reflect; ‘transcendentally’ considered, on the other hand, as somehow constitutive of consciousness and its world, language comes to assume an importance which it otherwise lacks” (304).
\item \textsuperscript{21} There is an echo of this defense of Kant in “On Truth and Lie,” in which Nietzsche argues, “For also our opposition of individual and genus is anthropomorphic and does not stem from the essence of things, even though we also do not venture to say that it does not correspond to it: this would be namely a dogmatic assertion, and as such just as unprovable as the opposite” (KGW III.2, 374).
\end{itemize}
skepticism through arguing that correspondence might be possible, it is the actual positing of an independent reality in the first place, to which our appearances and cognition might correspond, that is the very essence of skepticism. Thus, Nietzsche also rejects the independent reality on which such correspondence is based. In his rejection of metaphysical realism, Nietzsche concludes, more radically than Kant, that our knowledge is ultimately limited by our metaphoric and anthropomorphic constitution.

Kant’s influence on Nietzsche is also expressed in the latter’s acceptance of the limitations of reason. He quotes verbatim in his notebooks Kant’s famous declaration from the preface to the second edition: “Thus I had to deny knowledge in order to make room for faith” (KSA 7, 19[34], 426–27).\(^\text{22}\) It is in this statement that Nietzsche infers the subtle claim that the limitation of knowledge requires something uniquely human to replace this loss: “Very important! A cultural need had driven him! Strange opposition ‘knowledge and faith’! … Kant knew no other opposition! But we do!” (KSA 7, 19[34], 427). The other opposition to which Nietzsche refers is between art and knowledge. Nietzsche does not see faith as a way through the skepticism that results from the limitations of our cognitive capacities; rather art becomes for Nietzsche a different path in which to fulfill the cultural void left by reason’s shortcomings:

We must go beyond this skepticism, we must forget it! How much must we not forget in this world! Art, the ideal form, the temperature. Not in cognizing, but in creating lies our salvation! In the highest illusions, in the noblest surge of emotion lies our significance. If the universe does not concern us, then we will have the right to despise it. (KSA 7, 19[125], 459)

Nietzsche is primarily concerned with the capacity of art to overcome skepticism. Art is the re-enchantment of the world and universe, reinvigorating a sense of home within them. Otherwise, the skepticism and displacement that result from our limitations would only lead us to resent the world and ourselves.

Nietzsche claims that it is art rather than faith or science that ultimately reconciles our linguistic, sensible, and cognitive limitations with the world. This is because art

\(^{22}\) See *Critique of Pure Reason* Bxxx; 117.
fundamentally performs the act of creating rather than merely believing as with faith, or knowing as with science. The act of creating is the selfsame act with which humans not only synecdochically assimilate the world, but it is also the condition of possibility for knowing. In “On Truth and Lie,” Nietzsche describes this act of creating as the fundamental drive to metaphor-formation:

This drive to metaphor-formation, this fundamental drive of humans, which one cannot discount for a moment, because one would discount with it humans themselves, is in truth not conquered and scarcely controlled due to the fact that out of its volatilized creations, the concepts, a regular and rigid new world is built for it as a stronghold. It seeks a new area and another channel for its works, and finds it principally in myth and in art. It constantly confuses the categories [Rubriken] and cells of concepts in that it puts down new transferences [Übertragungen], metaphors, and metonymies. (KGW III.2, 381)

This drive to metaphor-formation is the fundamental artistic act of creating because within the linguistic, sensible, and cognitive spheres it carries-over, exchanges, and assimilates original nerve-stimuli into a conceptual order that houses human life. Although this act of creating expresses itself in both art and science, it is only within the realm of art that this act is recognized as creating—whereas science either disregards, or forgets, not only that the conceptual framework with which it seeks to understand the world, but also that the world itself are the products of its own artistic and tropological creation. For Nietzsche, the fundamental error that leads to skepticism is not that our faculties do not correspond to an independent reality, but rather that we might posit this independent reality in the first place.

Art and myth, however, recognize the fundamental drive to create and recreate the world anthropomorphically. Through art and myth, creating and understanding are reconciled because the world is understandable precisely because it is a human creation. In order to demonstrate this reconciliation, Nietzsche provides the example of the ancient Greeks in contrast to the scientific worldview: “The waking day of a mythically excited people, for instance in ancient Greece, through the constant working of wonder, is how they accept myth in the action of dreams, similarly as the day of scientifically sober thinkers” (KGW III.2, 382). The mythic and artistic culture of the Greeks treated everyday life as an enchanted creation, yet they took these illusions to be as real as science now takes independent reality. Nietzsche describes this creative act of enchantment as “at any moment, as in dreams, anything is possible, and the entirety of nature swarms around humanity, as
though it were only the masquerade of the gods, who make only a joke out of all the forms
that deceive humans” (KGW III.2, 381–82). The Greek solution to the estrangement of
humans from nature is to recreate nature in the image of humanity, and to regard the
deception at the heart of this creation with as much seriousness as a joke.

In contrast to the seriousness with which science pursues its object, art recreates the
world with a sense of joyful pleasure. Nietzsche argues that through this activity, humans
find their home in the world: “The intellect, this master of dissimulation, is free and released
from its other slave-service, so long as it can deceive without harm and celebrate its
Saturnalia. … It copies human life, but takes it for a good thing and seems to be quite
satisfied with it” (KGW III.2, 382). It is precisely in the realm art and myth through which
humans deceive without harming, and through this deception, the world is
anthropomorphized and loses its alienness. The world and nature are recreated and re-
enchanted as a divinity in which people see as belonging to themselves and belonging to the
world. Moreover, it creates a culture in which to house humanity, thereby not merely
describing the world and nature, but transferring and transforming them through
metamorphosis and assimilation: “the intuitive person, standing in the midst of a culture, in
addition to a defense against trouble, already harvests from his intuitions a continuous
streaming of illumination, cheer, and redemption” (KGW III.2, 383). It is the act of
anthropomorphism that allows us to concern ourselves with the world without despising it.
CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

Kant’s influence on Nietzsche’s theory of language is clearly present in “On Truth and Lie.” Nietzsche appropriates, critiques, and performs central themes from the first Critique, responding to Kant’s a priori conditions of possibility with a socio-linguistic genealogy, replacing the principal operation of synthesis with tropological relations, and reenvisioning the answer to skepticism as an artistic undertaking. But even more significant than how Nietzsche’s work is shaped by Kant, is, perhaps, how Nietzsche brings something to Kant’s work as well. The preface to the first edition of Critique of Pure Reason begins with a paradox: “Human reason has the peculiar fate in one species of its cognitions that it is burdened with questions which it cannot dismiss, since they are given to it as problems by the nature of reason itself, but which it also cannot answer, since they transcend every capacity of human reason” (Pluhar Avii; 99). Here in Kant’s personification, reason is burdened by its fate to answer questions it can neither answer nor dismiss. Reason is somehow obligated to perform these tasks, but Kant never addresses where this obligation comes from. For him, it is enough to try to solve this paradox without attending to what motivates it. It is in Nietzsche’s “On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense,” written almost a hundred years later, that this question is finally answered: reason is motivated, because it is human reason after all, by life-preserving consequences and it is obligated by its own fate and existence to pursue them. It is in this respect that Nietzsche does not merely appropriate Kant’s project in his response to it, but rather he furthers the conversation and may actually render it more complete.

Wayne Booth argues in “Metaphor as Rhetoric” that “we could say that the whole work of each philosopher amounts to an elaborate critique of the inadequacy of all other philosophers’ metaphors” (66). This observation is particularly true with respect to Nietzsche’s response to Kant’s transcendental project. Nietzsche’s critique is a fundamental
criticism of the inadequacy of Kant’s dominant metaphors, which Nietzsche takes as seriously (although in a playful way) as Kant himself. Nietzsche replaces Kant’s singular metaphor of synthesis with the three tropes of metaphor, metonymy, and anthropomorphism, making Kant’s already complex system answer to the further complexities of language, social relations, and human desires. Under the weight of these fundamental human experiences, Nietzsche provides a multisided, defeasible ground that is able to support even Kant’s inflexible logical structure. He accounts for and incorporates the scientific worldview through an understanding of how it satisfies life-preserving consequences, even as he critiques its inadequacies—whereas Kant’s epistemological foundation is unable to provide a ground beyond cognition’s agreement with its object.

More significant is that Nietzsche’s dominant metaphor for cognition, language, and perception is metaphor itself. This points toward an approach that moves beyond the screen of rhetoric and philosophy in conflict and opens up the possibility of a rhetoric of philosophy. Rather than seeking the universal and necessary ground as the condition of possibility for experience, using metaphor as the central term redirects our investigations to the possibility that there is something prior to this ground. While one might examine the logical structure latent in the tropological, we can also analyze the tropological foundation from which logic itself develops. But it will be argued that a tropological foundation is not in itself either universal or necessary; rather it is merely particular and contingent. However, rhetoric concerns itself with how the particular and contingent become universal and necessary, although not in the strictest sense, but rather through the process and prescription of linguistic conventions as well as the social demands that desire stability. A rhetoric of philosophy posits uncertainty as the generating experience from which conviction is derived; or as Nietzsche puts it in his notebooks, “Confusion is the original phenomenon” (KSA 7, 19[217], 487). If this were not the case, humans would desire neither rhetoric to persuade nor philosophy to clarify. Both philosophy and rhetoric exist as an answer to this original phenomenon of confusion in which uncertainty threatens existence. From this perspective, philosophy and rhetoric are not fundamentally in conflict; rather they are co-constitutive, addressing the primary problem from two different yet indispensable positions. Nietzsche’s own comparison in “On Truth and Lie” between the conceptual worldview in contrast with the intuitive serves as an analogy between this relationship between philosophy and rhetoric:
“Both desire to rule over life: this one by knowing how to meet principal needs through precaution, prudence, and regularity; and that one, as an ‘overjoyed hero,’ by not seeing those needs, only takes life as real disguised as illusion and beauty” (KGW III.2, 383). The first establishes security in the contingency of life, while the second generates meaning from contingency. From the standpoint of truth, these positions remain at odds; however, from the perspective of life, together they become universal and necessary conditions of possibility for the existence and preservation of life.
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