

**Dreaming with Kant and Nietzsche:  
The Recovery of the Artistically  
Creating Subject in  
*On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense***

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**Abstract:** Friedrich Nietzsche's *On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense* is an enigmatic text that has proven difficult to interpret. I argue that Immanuel Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* influences and sheds light on this early essay. I demonstrate that Kant's discussion of the transition from infancy to adulthood is present in Nietzsche's discussion of the origin of the truth drive. Having established a textual connection, I argue that Nietzsche inverts Kant's account of cognitive development and aims to shear it of teleology by arguing that the choice to privilege the rational over the aesthetic is grounded in pragmatic criteria and not in any essential structure of the individual. Seen in this light, the essay is shown to be a pragmatic anthropology (in Kant's sense of the term) which aims to provide individuals with a life-affirming orientation grounded in creative self-expression.

**Keywords:** Aesthetics, Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View, Kant, *On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense*, Nietzsche

## **Introduction**

In this paper I discuss the relationship between Friedrich Nietzsche's *On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense* and Immanuel Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. I show that there are striking similarities between Kant's account of cognitive development in the *Anthropology* and Nietzsche's discussion of the origin of human interest in truth, and I argue that this is evidence that Nietzsche was familiar with Kant's *Anthropology*. I also argue that the similarities and dissimilarities between these two texts may be used to interpret Nietzsche's essay and to show that Nietzsche's aim in this text is to examine human interest in truth rather than truth itself. As such, Nietzsche may be said to provide a pragmatic anthropology in Kant's sense of the term.

I proceed by first discussing the background of *Truth and Lie* and the difficulties involved with its interpretation, as well as general allusions to Kant that it may contain. Next, I introduce Kant's *Anthropology* and its discussion of cognitive development and compare it to Nietzsche's discussion of the origin of the truth drive. I argue that given the similarities between key passages in both texts, it is plausible that Nietzsche is using Kant's account and at the same time making the case that Kant's account is life-denying. Finally, I examine Kant's discussion of imagination in the mature individual and the need for the mature individual to retain control over her imagination, and I argue that Nietzsche is reacting to this when discussing the intuitive man and the rational man. I show that Nietzsche creatively appropriates some of Kant's observations and assertions concerning human beings in order to present what he considers to be a life-affirming path for individuals.

## Nietzsche and Kant

Nietzsche had a complicated relationship with Kant's thought.<sup>1</sup> He was most familiar with Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment*. There is also some evidence that he had read some of Kant's other works, including the *Critique of Pure Reason* and the *Critique of Practical Reason*. Early in his career he was deeply influenced by Arthur Schopenhauer, as well as by Neo-Kantian thinkers such as Friedrich Lange and Kuno Fischer. Much of his information about Kant comes from these three philosophers. In 1868 he was planning to write a dissertation on teleology and life which would have made significant use of Kant's work in addition to that of Schopenhauer, Lange, and Goethe.<sup>2</sup>

In this paper, I focus on Nietzsche's relationship with Kant's *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*. Nietzsche does not directly quote from Kant's *Anthropology* in any published work, and his most explicit published reference to its ideas is found in the *Genealogy of Morality* (published in 1887), where he states that: "let us for instance honor Kant for

<sup>1</sup> For an overview of Nietzsche's engagements with Kant's thought see: Hill, R. K., 2003. *Nietzsche's Critiques: The Kantian Foundations of His Thought*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, pp. 1 – 32.

<sup>2</sup> For a discussion of this abandoned project, see Gardner, S., 2019. Nietzsche on Kant and teleology in 1868: "life" is something entirely dark ...? *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy* 62(1), pp. 23 – 48. In this article, Gardner also argues that Nietzsche's encounter with Kant's thought played an important role in the development of *The Birth of Tragedy from the Spirit of Music*.

what he was able to teach us, with the naivete of a country preacher, about the unique properties of the sense of touch!”<sup>3</sup> Since the *Anthropology* is the only published work in which Kant has an extensive discussion of the nature of touch, it is likely that this is a reference to this text.<sup>4</sup>

George J. Stack argues that it is plausible that Nietzsche had read Kant’s *Anthropology*.<sup>5</sup> He points to a striking resemblance between two passages in Nietzsche’s *Truth and Lie* and two passages in Kant’s *Anthropology*. The first is the following from Kant: “So it already belongs to the original composition of a human creature and to the concept of his species to explore the thoughts of others but to withhold one’s own; a near quality which then does not fail to progress gradually from dissimulation to intentional deception and finally to lying.”<sup>6</sup> This has a resemblance to the following passage from Nietzsche:

This art of dissimulation reaches its peak in man. Deception, flattering, lying, deluding, talking behind the back, putting up a false front, living in borrowed splendor, wearing a mask, hiding behind convention, playing a role for others and for oneself, in a short, a continuous fluttering around the solitary flame of vanity—is so much the rule and the law among men that there is almost nothing which is less comprehensible than how an honest and pure drive for truth could have arisen among them.<sup>7</sup>

Stack also points out that Nietzsche, in *Truth and Lie*, states the following: “As a means for the preservation of the individual, the intellect unfolds its principal powers in dissimulation, which is the means by which weaker, less robust individuals preserve themselves—since they have been denied the chance to wage the battle of existence with horns or with the sharp teeth of beasts of prey.”<sup>8</sup> Whereas Kant states the following in his *Anthropology*:

<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche, F., 1887/2014. On the Genealogy of Morality (1887), trans. De Caro, A. In: *Beyond Good and Evil / On the Genealogy of Morality*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, p. 293 [GM, III 6].

<sup>4</sup> Kant, I., 1798/2007. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* (1798), trans. R.B. Louden. In: Louden, R. B. – Zoller, G., eds. *Anthropology, History and Education*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, pp. 265 – 266 [7:154-156].

<sup>5</sup> Stack, J. G., 2005. *Nietzsche’s Anthropic Circle: Man, Science, and Myth*. Rochester: University of Rochester Press, p. 214.

<sup>6</sup> Kant, I., 1798/2007. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, *ibid.*, p. 427 [7:332].

<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche, F., 1896/1979. On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense (1896), trans. Breazeale, D., In: *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche’s Notebooks of the Early 1870’s*. London: Humanities Press International, p. 80 [TL I].

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80 [TL I].

The questions whether the human being was originally destined to walk on four feet [...] or on two feet; [...] whether the human being is a herbivorous or [...] a carnivorous animal; – whether, since he has neither claws nor fangs, consequently (without reason) no weapons, he is by nature a predator or a peaceable animal—the answer to these questions is of no consequence.<sup>9</sup>

I agree with Stack that these similarities strongly suggest that Nietzsche had read Kant's *Anthropology* and was thinking about it explicitly when writing *Truth and Lie*. In my discussion below, I will present further similarities and argue that they show a philosophical connection such that *Truth and Lie* may be interpreted as an attempt to invert Kant's *Anthropology* in order to present what Nietzsche sees as a more life-affirming path than the one presented by Kant.

### **Interpreting *On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense***

*On Truth and Lie in an Extramoral Sense* is an early text that Nietzsche wrote in 1873, one year after the publication of *The Birth of Tragedy out of the Spirit of Music*. Nietzsche's reasons for not publishing it himself are unknown. It was published by his sister, Elisabeth Förster-Nietzsche, in 1896. In this short text, Nietzsche discusses the origin of the human desire for truth (that is, the belief that truth in itself is good and falsehood as such is bad). He marvels at the fact that human beings possess this drive since the truth is often deeply harsh and difficult to take into account, and that much of human life requires deception.

Nietzsche aims to provide a genealogical account of the desire for truth, and partially locates the origin for this desire in communal living where to lie (i.e. to use signs in a way that contradicts established conventions) makes people untrustworthy and unpredictable in a malicious way. Truth as such is derived from the desire for predictability and the security that comes with having a sense of what one can expect to occur in the future so that one may prepare for it. This would suggest that the concept of truth is not derived from a desire to understand the world independently of its relationship to a human knower, but rather from a desire to control the world so as to make it predictable and therefore safe.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Kant, I., 1798/2007. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, *ibid.*, p. 417 [7:322].

<sup>10</sup> "What men avoid by excluding the liar is not so much being defrauded as it is being harmed by means of fraud. Thus, even at this stage, what they hate is basically not deception itself, but rather the unpleasant, hated consequences of certain sorts of deception. It is in a similarly restricted sense that man now wants nothing but truth: he desires the pleasant, life-preserving

Part of Nietzsche's contention is that people see lying as bad when it causes harm, but when it does not cause harm, such as in theatrical plays or in dreams, then people are not offended by lying. As will be discussed later, Nietzsche posits a creative process as more fundamental than the drive towards truth, which provides material for the formulation of concepts whose use can later be delineated according to public rules so as to produce knowledge claims in the appropriate circumstances.

This text has proven to be difficult to interpret, especially given the fact that it is not a complete essay and was not chosen for publication by its author. Nietzsche's discussion of truth is potentially threatened by a vicious circularity. This is because he makes claims about the rootedness of truth claims in falsehoods, but then makes claims about human knowledge which, if taken at face value, would undermine his claims that truths are in some sense always grounded in lies. Some scholars have seen Nietzsche as aiming to show the impossibility of understanding truth claims in terms of propositions corresponding to non-linguistic states of affairs, in a way which anticipates postmodern approaches to truth. According to this view, Nietzsche's aim is performative, since he demonstrates to the reader that language is inherently metaphorical and so never aims to establish truth about an independent reality. This is something which can only be shown and not stated, so that once one grasps the point of the essay one can simply move on from taking claims concerning the nature of truth seriously.<sup>11</sup> That is, the essay shows to the reader, in a non-propositional way, that, given the way that language works, we should not think of any truth claims as describing the permanent reality of things and as being unrevisable.

This approach is challenged by Maudmarie Clark, who argues that Nietzsche advocates for a Kantian approach to truth.<sup>12</sup> She argues that Nietzsche is not primarily focusing on the nature of language in this essay, nor does he deny that there are things in themselves independent of human experience. Rather, she maintains that Nietzsche is arguing that scientific claims to objective truth are undercut by the "metaphorical" nature of human perception, which is constitutively incapable of representing reality as

consequences of truth." Nietzsche, F., 1896/1979. *On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, *ibid.*, p. 81 [TL 1].

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of this approach, see Warminski, A., 2013. *Material Inscriptions: Rhetorical Reading in Practice and Theory*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, pp. 103 – 129. Also, see de Man, P., 1979. *Allegories of Reading: Figural Language in Rousseau, Nietzsche, Rilke, and Proust*. New Haven: Yale University Press, pp. 103 – 118.

<sup>12</sup> Clark, M., 1990. *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*. New York: Cambridge University Press, pp. 63 – 93.

it is independently of any human knower. This approach is Kantian, in that it shows that our perceptions of the world allow only for objective claims concerning the conditions for things being presented to a knowing subject rather than descriptions of things in themselves. According to this view, Nietzsche's point is that truth claims only stand as such when they are divorced from attempts to definitively characterize a thing-in-itself.

Jessica Berry provides another approach that rejects both the post-modern reading as well as Clark's Kantian reading.<sup>13</sup> She argues that Nietzsche's primary concern in this essay is to account for the origin of the drive toward truth in human beings, that is, he is concerned with answering the questions of why and how human beings came to care about truth as such. She terms his interests to be psychological rather than metaphysical, arguing that in this essay Nietzsche is not interested in truth as such, but rather in the drive to truth. She argues that Nietzsche is following the route of the Pyrronian Sceptics in that he aims to show a path that steers clear of dogmatic assertions concerning the nature of reality.

My approach in this paper builds on Berry's in that it focuses on the nature of the truth drive rather than on truth as such, and sees Nietzsche as interested in presenting an approach to truth that is ultimately life-affirming. As stated earlier, my interpretation seeks to present Nietzsche's approach as a pragmatic anthropology in Kant's sense of the term.<sup>14</sup> By this I mean that, Nietzsche aims to reveal the role played by truth claims in human life and also to delineate approaches to those truth claims that are life-affirming and those that end in frustration. He does this by building on Kant's anthropological account of how human beings become mature rational agents while at the same time offering a subversive critique of Kant's approach, which privileges reason in human life.

### Allusions to Kant in *Truth and Lie*

Though Nietzsche does not explicitly mention Kant in *Truth and Lie*, it is plausible to read certain passages as referring to Kant more generally in addition to those which I maintain are related to Kant's *Anthropology*.<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche makes some snide comments concerning philosophers in gen-

<sup>13</sup> Berry, J., 2006. Skepticism in Nietzsche's Earliest Work: Another Look at Nietzsche's "On Truth and Lies in an Extra-Moral Sense." *International Studies in Philosophy* 38(3), pp. 33 – 48.

<sup>14</sup> Pierre Gori argues that Nietzsche's approach in *Twilight of the Idols* is a pragmatic anthropology in Kant's sense of the term. See Gori, P., 2015. Nietzsche's Late Pragmatic Anthropology. *Journal of Philosophical Research* 40, pp. 377 – 404.

<sup>15</sup> See Hill, R. K., *Nietzsche's Critiques: The Kantian Foundations of his Thought*, *ibid.*, pp. 171 – 175.

eral toward the beginning of this essay. Kant easily fits as a target of Nietzsche's derision. For example, Nietzsche states that:

... [the human intellect] has no additional mission which would lead it beyond human life. Rather, it is human, and only its possessor and begetter takes it so solemnly—as though the world's axis turned within it. But if we could communicate with the gnat, we would learn that he likewise flies through the air with the same solemnity, that he feels the flying center of the universe within himself..<sup>16</sup>

It is easy to see this passage as a mocking criticism of Kant's view that the possession of reason grants human beings a higher dignity than that of other living beings and reveals a destiny for human beings that lies beyond the sensible world. Nietzsche presents his own view as the opposite of this and asserts that humans possess an intellect only because they are "the most unfortunate, delicate, and ephemeral beings."<sup>17</sup>

Certainly, the above passage could also refer to philosophers other than Kant. However, Nietzsche's discussion of sensibility and concept formation clearly has an unmistakably Kantian air about it:

All that we actually know about [the] laws of nature is what we ourselves bring to them—time and space, and therefore relationships of succession and number. But everything marvelous about the laws of nature, everything that quite astonishes us therein and seems to demand our explanation, everything that might lead us to distrust idealism: all this is completely and solely contained within the mathematical strictness and inviolability of our representations of time and space. But we produce these representations in and from ourselves with the same necessity with which the spider spins.<sup>18</sup>

This clearly evokes Kant's claims concerning the nature of space and time as forms of sensibility of a knowing subject rather than as things in themselves. Nietzsche makes the Kantian claim that our most fundamental concepts are not derived from sense perception but rather our sense perception is structured in such a way that the world we experience must conform to conditions inherent in the knowing subject.<sup>19</sup> As a result, we do not know things in themselves but rather know things in light of our

<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche, F., 1896/1979. *On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, *ibid.*, p. 79 [TL 1].

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 80 [TL 1].

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 87 [TL 1].

<sup>19</sup> Stack discusses Kant's influence on this aspect of Nietzsche's essay. See Stack, J. G., 2005. *Nietzsche's Anthropic Circle: Man, Science, and Myth*, *ibid.*, pp. 7 – 10, 24 – 26.

own cognitive frameworks, and so arrange sensory perceptions according to our own internal criteria of intelligibility.

It is clear from the above, that Nietzsche is thinking about Kant when he is writing this essay, and that this point is uncontroversial. In the next section, I establish that he is specifically responding to Kant's *Anthropology*.

## Becoming Rational

As discussed earlier, there are good reasons for thinking that Nietzsche had access to Kant's *Anthropology*. The similarities pointed out by Stack are striking and, as I will show, it is possible to correlate even more passages in these two texts, and to establish that Nietzsche is playing with some of Kant's ideas, accepting certain aspects of Kant's descriptions while challenging others.

Kant published *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* in 1798 and it is based on lectures that he gave annually from 1772 to 1796. Anthropology is the study of human beings, and Kant maintains that there are two approaches to anthropology: physiological and pragmatic. The former focuses on biological mechanisms involved in human capacities. For example, physiological anthropology concerns itself with discovering the brain structures involved in the formation of memory, while pragmatic anthropology would seek to find techniques which individuals may use in order to improve their memories.<sup>20</sup> Thus, pragmatic anthropology investigates human beings with respect to how they make their way through the world with the aim of helping human beings live better lives in order to achieve a fulfillment of their human nature. The discussion below aims to show that Nietzsche's discussion of human beings in *Truth and Lie* fits very well with this notion of a pragmatic anthropology.

In this text, Kant states the following concerning children:

The observation that a child neither expresses tears nor laughs until three months after his birth appears to be based on the development of certain ideas of offense and injustice, which point to reason. In this period of time he begins to follow with his eyes shining objects held before him, and this is the crude beginning of the progress of perception (apprehension of the ideas of sense), which enlarges to knowledge of objects of sense that is of experience.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>20</sup> See Kant, I., 1798/2007. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, *ibid.*, p. 231 [7:119].

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 239 – 240 [7:127-128].



From this passage, it is clear that Kant sees childhood as a time in which the individual does not think about herself as a unified subject who represents the world in a coherent way, but rather as having a stream of individual perceptions, and as having a feeling for her own existence and a will to exert on the world, to bring the world under her control, which also involves a sense of dignity which entails demanding respect from others. This only changes as the child is habituated socially and develops the ability to speak, to apply the word “I” to herself, to apply concepts to perceptions and so to experience a world of stable objects. There is an element of teleology in this description in that the adult’s rational nature is already present in an implicit manner in this early stage of life. Even though the child cannot think about itself in terms of “I thoughts,” it has a sense of its own dignity and demands respect from others. Thus, Kant is clear that the child is already on its way to becoming a rational agent and in some sense possesses this rationality in a state that is not yet fully actualized. This makes sense in light of the fact that he maintains that the understanding (which along with reason is a cognitive faculty) is heterogenous with respect to sensibility despite both closely working together to enable cognition.<sup>22</sup>

Kant is also clear about the forcefulness of human beings at this early stage. He refers to the child as a “tiny dictator”<sup>23</sup> who engages the world primarily through touch and so through manipulating things. He compares the faculty of the understanding to a sovereign and compares the sensible faculty to the people dominated by the sovereign. Sensibility and understanding are present in the human being from the very beginning and the process of maturation, according to Kant, is in some sense analogous to that of a group of individuals being made to conform to a governing force which is heterogeneous with it. Hence, Kant is clear that there is a hierarchy where sensibility is the lower faculty and the understanding is the higher faculty in the sense that the understanding provides organization to the products of sensibility.

Kant describes the relationship thus:

... the faculty of intuition (pure or empirical) contains only the singularity in objects, whereas the faculty of concepts contains the universality of representations, the rule to which the manifold of sensuous intuitions must be

<sup>22</sup> Kant defines the understanding as “the faculty of thinking (representing something by means of concepts).” Ibid., p. 303 [7:196]. He defines reason as “the faculty of deriving the particular from the universal and thus of representing it according to principles as necessary.” Ibid., p. 306 [7:200].

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 239 [7:128].

subordinated in order to bring unity to the cognition of the object.<sup>24</sup>

The picture that emerges from this passage and the passage discussing childhood above is that children begin with unique representations and then in the process of maturation come to gain the ability to compare and contrast those representations and take them to present stable objects that are perceivable also to other observers. They learn to talk about their perceptions in ways accessible to other people, in ways accessible to their community for affirmation and correction. As stated above, though, for Kant this process involves the community acting to help the maturing individual gain control over her own sensibility so that her own reason may gain control over her own imagination.

In *Truth and Lie*, Nietzsche also describes this process of initiation into community as involving an individual learning how to understand her sensibility in terms of publicly accessible concepts. However, he rejects the inherent hierarchy that places concepts over sensibility and rejects the idea that the community simply helps the individual along the natural path of developing her innate rational capacity. He argues that “from boredom and necessity” human beings desire to “exist socially and with the herd,” and that this involves accepting that “a uniformly valid and binding designation is invented for things and this legislation of language likewise establishes the first law of truth.”<sup>25</sup> Failure to follow these laws results in expulsion from the community.

Kant also uses the term “herd” in discussing human society, but he uses it to describe what a human society is not supposed to be. He states that “the human being was not meant to belong to a herd, like cattle, but to a hive, like the bee.”<sup>26</sup> By this he means that human beings are meant to work together, in an organized manner, toward the common goal of living according to reason, a goal which is meant to ultimately encompass all human beings.<sup>27</sup> He sees human beings “as a species of rational beings that strives among obstacles to rise out of evil in constant progress toward the good.” Kant is also clear that “one cannot expect to reach the goal by the free agreement of individuals, but only by a progressive organization

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., p. 303 [7:196].

<sup>25</sup> Nietzsche, F., 1896/1979. *On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, ibid., p. 80 [TL 1].

<sup>26</sup> See Kant, I., 1798/2007. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, ibid., p. 425 [7:330].

<sup>27</sup> “they subjugate themselves, though reluctantly to a discipline (of civil constraint). But in doing so they subjugate themselves only according to laws they themselves have given and they feel themselves ennobled by this consciousness; namely of belonging to a species that is suited to the destiny of the human being, as reason represents it to him in the ideal”. Ibid., p. 425 [7:330].

of citizens of the earth into and toward the species as a system that is cosmopolitically united.”<sup>28</sup> Thus, he sees this structured communal living according to an ideal of goodness as the goal of all human life.

Nietzsche also uses the imagery of bees in *Truth and Lie*. He states that human beings are higher than bees because a bee “builds with wax that he gathers from nature,” while the human being “builds with the far more delicate conceptual material which he first has to manufacture from himself.”<sup>29</sup> He goes on to compare scientific activity to that of bees who gather honey and place it in cells within honeycombs: “Just as the bee simultaneously constructs cells and fills them with honey, so science works unceasingly on this great columbarium of concepts, the graveyard of perceptions. It is always building new, higher stories and shoring up, cleaning and renovating the old cells...”<sup>30</sup> The images here are quite striking as, according to Nietzsche, the work of science, which functions under a common idea of truth and progress, does not extract something from those perceptions that is nourishing and life enhancing but takes those perceptions and drains them of their vivacity.

As the above discussion makes clear, both Kant and Nietzsche see the process of maturing into a rational adult as involving an individual learning to treat her perceptions in terms of concepts inherited from her community. They both affirm that we first feel ourselves existing and having a fundamental dignity prior to being able to talk and think about ourselves and express that reality through concepts. What is missing from Nietzsche’s account that is present in Kant’s, is that Kant sees the external regulation of human activity as aiding the child to develop an internal power of self regulation such that the child is able to actualize her cognitive faculties and gain control over representations provided by the senses. In doing so, she becomes more fully what she already is striving to

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp. 428 – 429 [7:333]. Kant spells this out more fully earlier in the text where he states that each human being “has a character, which he himself creates, insofar as he is capable of perfecting himself according to ends that he himself adopts. By means of this the human being, as an animal endowed with the capacity to reason (animal rationale), can make out of himself a rational animal (animal rationale)-whereby he first preserves himself and his species; secondly trains, instructs and educates his species for domestic society; thirdly governs it as a systematic whole (arranged according to principles of reason) appropriate for society.” Ibid., pp. 415 – 416 [7:321-322].

<sup>29</sup> “As a genius of construction man raises himself far above the bee in the following way: whereas the bee builds with wax what he gathers from nature, man builds with the far more delicate conceptual material which he first has to manufacture himself.” Nietzsche, F., 1896/1979. *On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense*, ibid., p. 85 [TL 1].

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 88 [TL 2].

be. This element is entirely absent from Nietzsche's account. This contrast becomes even more pronounced when Nietzsche's and Kant's comments concerning the active role of imagination in mature human beings are examined.

### The Choice to Remain Rational

According to Kant's account, the child is not entirely absent in the fully actualized rational adult. He states that in observing children, an adult may be taken back to this earlier state where the imagination was less limited by reason:

[In] playtime, the happiest time of all, during which the teacher once more enjoys the charm of childhood and practically makes himself a child. However, the memory of the teacher's childhood does not reach back to that time; for it was not the time of experiences but merely of scattered perceptions not yet united under the concept of an object.<sup>31</sup>

Hence, Kant believes that adults have not completely lost this sense of their childhood past. In watching the child, the caretaker is brought back to an earlier time without even having the ability to remember that time. Kant emphasizes that the caretaker does not remember being a child in that early stage, and this suggests that the playfulness of childhood remains as a potential in the adult and not something understood as simply a past condition. Hence, despite all of the developments of maturation, the adult retains a capacity for creativity, unrestrained by concepts, which characterizes this earlier stage of human life.

Later on in the *Anthropology*, Kant explicitly associates the early stage of human life with an infectious creativity that overwhelms the capacity for rational justification, and maintains that this capacity continues in adults when they dream and engage in fantasy, as is clear in the following passage: "...unintentional play of productive power of imagination, which can then be called fantasy, the tendency to harmless lying that is always met with in children and now and then in adults [...]. The events and supposed adventures they narrate issue from the power of imagination like a growing avalanche as it rolls down..."<sup>32</sup> Here, he mentions how children in this state have an innocent tendency towards lying, and so one could say that they have an extramoral sense of lying because they delight in fan-

<sup>31</sup> See Kant, I., 1798/2007. *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, *ibid.*, p. 240 [7:128].

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 289 [7:180].

ciful inventiveness separated from the harmful effects of lying such as the intention to deceive others. Those engaging in this play create descriptions and statements woven together through loose association and emotions rather than through the objective entailment relations of their conceptual content. Kant provides more detail in the following passage:

The play of fantasy with the human being in sleep is called dreaming and it also takes place in a healthy condition, on the other hand if it happens while the human being is awake, it reveals a diseased condition [...]. Dreaming is a wise arrangement of nature for exciting the power of life through affects related to involuntary invented events while bodily movements based on choice. Are in the meantime suspended. – But one must not take the stories we dream to be revelations from an invisible world.<sup>33</sup>

It is clear from this passage that, for Kant, this earlier state is to some degree operative in human beings who have matured and actualized their rational capacities. Fantasy is associated with children, but remains in mature human beings when they dream and can occasionally appear in waking adult life. Dreaming is a sort of throwback to this earlier stage of development, and if it manifests itself in someone who is not sleeping, then it is a sign of disease.

Kant also warns against the tendency to take dreams as instances of contact with an immaterial world. He connects control over the tendency to be carried away by imaginative activity with mental health. Kant provides the following vivid description where he draws such a connection:

The night enlivens and raises it above its real content; just as the moon in evening makes a great figure in the heavens, though on a bright day it is seen as an insignificant little cloud. The power of imagination swarms in one who studies by candle-light in the still of the night or who quarrels with his imaginary opponent, or wanders about in his room building castles in the air but everything that seems important to him then loses its entire importance the following morning after a night's sleep. With time, however, he feels a wakening of his mental powers from this bad habit. Therefore the taming of the power of imagination, by going to sleep early so that one can get up early is a very useful rule for a psychological diet.<sup>34</sup>

*Truth and Lie* contains passages that have a striking affinity with the ones just provided. For example, towards the end of the essay, Nietzsche makes

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 285 [7:175].

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 289 – 290 [7:180-181].

the following claim:

Because of the way that myth takes it for granted that miracles are always happening, the waking life of a mythically inspired people—the ancient Greeks for instance—more closely resembles a dream than it does the waking world of a scientifically disenchanted thinker. When every tree can suddenly speak as a nymph, when a god in the shape of a bull can drag away maidens, when even the goddess Athena herself is suddenly seen in the company of Peisistratus driving through the marketplace of Athens with a beautiful team of horses [...] then as in a dream anything is possible at each moment and all of nature swarms around man as if it were nothing but a masquerade of the gods, who were merely amusing themselves by deceiving men in all these shapes. But man has an invincible inclination to allow himself to be deceived and it were, enchanted with happiness when the rhapsodist tells him epic fables as if they were true, or when the actor in the theater act more royally as any real kind. So long as it is able to deceive without injuring the master of deception, the intellect, is free.<sup>35</sup>

This is very similar in spirit to Kant's description above of the intoxicating play of the power of the imagination. It is as though Nietzsche takes Kant's description of someone enchanted by his own imagination and extends it to an entire civilization, and so characterizes the ancient Greeks as a society of waking dreamers.

A key difference between these two passages, though, is that Kant identifies such intoxicating activity of imagination which comes to be carried away beyond what it can rationally demonstrate to be a sign of immaturity or even disease. Nietzsche, however, revels in the unrestrained activity of the imagination, though at the same time he recognizes how it might appear dangerous and unsettling. He describes the process by which the imagination is tempered by concepts thus:

Only by forgetting this primitive world of metaphor can one live with any repose and consistency: only by means of the petrification and coagulation of a mass of images which originally *streamed from the primal faculty of human imagination* like a fiery liquid only in the invincible faith that this sun, this window, this table is a truth in itself, in short, only by forgetting that he himself is an artistically creating subject, does man live with any repose, security, and consistency.<sup>36</sup> (emphasis is mine)

<sup>35</sup> Nietzsche, F., 1896/1979. On the Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense, *ibid.*, p. 89 [TL 2].

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 86 [TL 1].

The first three lines of this passage fit very well with Kant's discussion of children quoted earlier, where he states that children first perceive the world in terms of a stream of representations not unified by concepts which would present them as belonging to stable objects. As established, both Nietzsche and Kant hold that the individual develops into a state where sensibility is consciously understood in light of concepts that delineate similarities between individual sensory representations, which allows the formation of expectations based on judgments according to rules for determining the conditions under which sensations present objects. They also agree, as discussed above, that the criteria of delineating similarities and contrasts are dependent on conditions inherent in the knowing subject and not in the thing as it is in itself.

A key element, according to Nietzsche, is that the criteria according to which an individual chooses the regularity offered by the rational development of concepts are pragmatic, whereas for Kant, these criteria are inherent in the individual whose essence is to be a rational agent. For Nietzsche, the wild stream of representations coming from the imagination threatens to do away with predictability and with feelings of safety, and so it is filtered according to criteria that favor survival. Here, he clearly departs from Kant. Given the passage immediately prior, it is clear that Nietzsche agrees with Kant that this tendency of imaginative activity can be suppressed though not entirely eliminated. They also both agree in asserting the intoxicating power of the imagination. However, Nietzsche aims to show, throughout the text, that the suppression of the imagination is not governed by distinctions that cut at the joints, so to speak, of human consciousness. Rather, he maintains that this suppression is governed by the desire to survive, that is, to continue to exist as long as possible. He stresses that this obsession with survival is to some degree self-defeating. For example, he begins the essay with the parable of the clever beasts who are very proud of their rationality but end up signifying nothing. Towards the end of the text, he asserts that "the man who is guided by concepts and abstractions only succeeds by such means in warding off misfortune without ever gaining happiness..."<sup>37</sup> This rational man is someone who "desires to rule over life" by "knowing how to meet his principal needs by means of foresight, prudence and regularity..."<sup>38</sup> Given the description in the passage above, it is clear that Nietzsche sees this as involving an active attempt to forget one's own creative nature, and that such an approach to existence is ultimately life-denying.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 91 [TL 2].

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 91 [TL 2].

Nietzsche contrasts the rational man with the intuitive man, who also wishes to rule over life but is not interested in survival for the sake of survival and acts as “as an overjoyed hero, counting as real only that life which has been disguised as illusion and beauty.” He goes on to discuss the intuitive man in the following terms:

And while he aims for the greatest possible freedom from pain, the intuitive man, standing in the midst of a culture, already reaps from his intuition a harvest of continually inflowing illumination, cheer and redemption—in addition to obtaining a defense against misfortune. To be sure, he suffers more intensely, when he suffers; he even suffers more frequently, since he does not understand how to learn from experience and keeps falling over and over again into the same ditch. He is then just as irrational in sorrow as he is in happiness: he cries aloud and will not be consoled.<sup>39</sup>

The intuitive man is thus someone who accepts the uniqueness of each moment and of each situation and sees within it the opportunity to respond in new and unforeseen ways. In doing so, the intuitive man is able to affirm the precarity and finite nature of his own existence and is able to affirm that existence precisely in its finitude.

The above contrast strongly suggests that Nietzsche is not attacking the concept of truth as such but contextualizing it within the desire to survive and arguing that the choice between living a life according to reason and living a life according to creative inspiration is not a choice between reality and irreality but rather a choice between a life concerned with survival and a life concerned with itself as a unique event. This is precisely what a pragmatic anthropology, in Kant’s sense of the term, is meant to do. The choice between the rational man and the intuitive man is made in terms of pragmatic criteria (and this approach to the world is life-affirming for a human being). Nietzsche’s description of how concepts are generated aims to show that people who live according to artistic inspiration are neither immature nor defective.

## Conclusion

In his *Anthropology*, Kant describes dreaming in adults as a throwback to childhood, as the dreamer’s imagination is less constrained by social conditioning. He writes about children as unable to identify themselves as

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., p. 91 [TL 2].



unified rational subjects but as having a direct felt awareness of their own existence, which includes a sense of power and dignity. He describes the process of maturation as aiding the individual in gaining control over her sensibility by her cognitive faculty and so allowing her to actualize herself as a human being.

I have shown how these elements are present in Nietzsche's essay and have focused especially on how Kant's account of an adult intoxicated by imaginative creation bears a striking similarity to Nietzsche's aesthetic man. Nietzsche echoes those parts of the *Anthropology* where Kant discusses the continued presence of childhood in adult lives, but sees its continuation as a pointer to another way of living that is beyond the rational rather than a sign of immaturity or mental illness. Thus, Nietzsche claims that "the waking life of a mythically inspired people—the ancient Greeks for instance—more closely resembles a dream than it does the waking world of a scientifically disenchanted thinker."<sup>40</sup> Nietzsche picks up on the trace of the primordial aesthetic element still present in the mature subject in Kant's account, and he points a path forward that he considers to be more life-affirming than the one presented by Kant.

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