Unattainability of the True World: Putnamian and Kripkensteinian Interpretation of Nietzsche's *The History of an Error*

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In this article I am interpreting Friedrich Nietzsche's piece of writing *"How the "True World" finally became a fable—The History of an Error"* in the context of 20th-century analytical philosophy of language. In particular, I am going to argue that the main theme in this text—the issue of abolishing "the true world"—can be interpreted as (1) Hilary Putnam's model-theoretic arguments against external realism and (2) Saul Kripke's Wittgensteinian (or Kripkensteinian) arguments against truth-conditional meaning theories. Interpreting this Nietzsche's text with the help of these arguments gives rise to two options determining Nietzsche's own position. The perspective of Putnam's argument seems to push Nietzsche to the quietist camp—the view that significant metaphysical debate between external realism and its opposite is impossible or inexpressible. On the other hand, the Kripkensteinian perspective gives us reasons to interpret Nietzsche as an adherer of the pragmatic account of semantics, which explains meaning through the use of language.

Keywords: Nietzsche, Putnam's argument, Kripkenstein, reference indeterminacy, quietism

1. Introduction

Starting in the late 1920s, logical positivism launched a specific—and perhaps in some ways quite unique—attack against traditional metaphysics. Of course, the intrinsic feeling or yet unformed idea that might have triggered the initial thought—that there is something inherently wrong with the way philosophy has been done so far, that it has been far less than satisfying in answering the traditional "big" philosophical questions—that itself is a very

traditional and unoriginal way of looking at things. Similar feelings have
been expressed in a strong and condensed way by Friedrich Wilhelm Niet-
zsche in a number of his works, particularly in the chapter "*How the "True
World" finally became a fable—The History of an Error*" in his book *The Twi-
light of the Idols or, How one Philosophizes with a Hammer* (original 1889;
Nietzsche 1954, 463–563). The content of this article is a specific interpreta-
tion of this chapter.

The logical positivists' project started with attempts to outcast, or end,
traditional metaphysics—which would comprise most of the western phi-
losophy done until the 20th century—by arguing that the central sentences
figuring in metaphysical theories are literally meaningless. For that, criteria
for the distinction between meaningful and meaningless had to be provided,
and this turned out to be a notoriously difficult task to fulfil. But the pro-
cess itself was and is extremely fruitful, because it brought to sharp atten-
tion the question of expressibility—how our symbolic representation mech-
anisms (the logic of language) set some limits to what can be expressed and
what cannot. Before we set out to tackle the 'big' philosophical questions,
we should know what we are capable of expressing at all—if we only have
one-coloured paint, then we can paint a picture in only one colour.

In this article, I am focusing on the question of (in)expressibility and
the consequences thereof in Nietzsche's *The History of an Error*. I am going
to offer an interpretation that in that piece of writing Nietzsche is arguing
against the view that in the context of 20th-century analytical philosophy of
language is called the external realism. Thus, the ideas that Nietzsche is ex-
pressing in this chapter in a very exclamative and manifestative manner can
be interpreted to have the content of some specific arguments against the ex-
ternal realism. In particular, I am going to concentrate on Hilary Putnam's
model-theoretic arguments against external realism, and on Saul Kripke's
Wittgensteinian (or Kripkensteinian) arguments against truth-conditional
meaning theories. Both of these lines of thinking force us to the conclu-
sion that external realism is either false or inexpressible. Considering the
interpretation along the lines of Putnam's arguments, we can see the threat
of quietism arising—that is the view that significant debate between exter-
nal realism and its opposite—non-realism—is impossible or inexpressible,
which might give us one key to understanding of the last paragraph of Ni-
etzsche's *The History of an Error*. The second option stems from tackling
the consequences of Kripkensteinian argument which would give us reasons
to interpret Nietzsche as an adherer of the pragmatic account of semantics,
which explains meaning through the use of language in language games.

It seems appropriate to add two disclaimers. Firstly, in order to keep this
essay in a precise framework and self-contained, I am not going to draw ex-

plicit connections to Nietzsche's other works. The chapter *The History of an Error* is interpreted independently and separately in the context of Putnam's and Kripke's arguments. Secondly, for the same reason, I am also going to neglect other interpretations of the chapter, with the only exception of a few references to Martin Heidegger's "Nietzsche".[1]

Hence, as these disclaimers would suggest, I am leaving it to the reader to decide how much insight into Nietzsche's legacy this essay would provide, nor am I claiming that this piece of writing by Nietzsche has some advancing input to Putnam's and Kripke's arguments. Rather, I am presenting this as a philosophical interpretative game, an attempt of translation of ideas from one context to another.

The setup of the essay is the following. In the first section, I give the explication of Nietzsche's *The History of an Error*. In the second section, I interpret Nietzsche's concept of the "true world" as the world view of the external realist and summarize Hilary Putnam's argument against it. The third section concerns Kripke's Wittgensteinian sceptical arguments. The fourth section examines the landscape left after the debates in the previous sections and looks for interpretations of the last (6th) paragraph of *The History of an Error*.

2. Nietzsche's history of western philosophy as an error and the argument for abolishing it

As a reminder and a reference point, here are the excerpts from Nietzsche's "*How the "true world" finally became a fable—The History of an Error*" (Nietzsche 1954, 485):

> 1. The true world—attainable for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man; he lives in it, *he is it*. (The oldest form of the idea, relatively sensible, simple, and persuasive. A circumlocution for the sentence, "I, Plato, *am* the truth.")
> 2. The true world—unattainable for now, but promised for the sage, the pious, the virtuous man […].
> 3. The true world—unattainable, indemonstrable, unpromisable; but the very thought of it—a consolation, an obligation, an imperative. (At bottom, the old sun, but seen through mist and scepticism. The idea has become elusive, pale, Nordic, Königsbergian.)
> 4. The true world—unattainable? At any rate, unattained. And being unattained, also *unknown*. Consequently, not consoling, redeeming, or obligating: how could something unknown obligate us? (Grey

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[1] Perhaps it is appropriate just to mention two important texts that have offered interpretations on the issues close to this article: (Clark 1990) and (Bornedal 2010). However, I am not drawing any further connections to these texts in order to keep the discussion in a manageable form and length for a journal article.

morning. The first yawn of reason. The cockcrow of positivism.)

5. The "true" world—an idea which is no longer good for anything, not even obligating—an idea which has become useless and superfluous—*consequently*, a refuted idea: let us abolish it! […]

6. The true world—we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! *With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one.* […]

In these paragraphs Nietzsche divides history into six parts, comprising the most important epochs of Western thought. This has standardly been interpreted as the phases of Platonism (in Nietzsche's sense) and its overcoming, leading to Nietzsche's philosophy (see Heidegger 1979, 201–202). Thus, explicitly referring to Plato in the first paragraph, the Grand Error that Nietzsche is concerned with here is Platonism, which gives us the paradigm how we should think of the concept of "the true world"—it is a potentially trans-empirical and independent universe, which is the only truly real and perfect world. At the beginning of the error, the naïve thought prevailed that despite its being unattainable for the layman, it is accessible and expressible for philosophers (the 2nd paragraph). This already makes the "true world" something that is only potentially accessible; it slips out of sight; the threat of becoming completely unattainable is already there with Plato. This threat of great silence only increases during the course of history and actualizes with its full power in Kant's concept of *Ding-an-sich*—the "true world" becomes a transcendent of phenomenal world, completely "unattainable, indemonstrable" (the 3rd paragraph). Our epistemic and cognitive features are such that it is not possible to apply or attribute any predicates to it, which makes it inexpressible. However, it is still there, but only as a postulate of practical reason (see Heidegger 1979, 205).

The next chapter (the 4th paragraph) in the history of thought is the birth of German Idealism (Heidegger 1979, 206). The Kantian system that posited the necessarily unattainable supersensuous "true world" is unmasked—if it escapes any cognition, then it becomes completely unknowable, to the extent that even its existence is cast into doubt.

This is followed by forms of phenomenalism and the "cockcrow of positivism", making the common concession that if we cannot talk about the "true world", then there is also no point in discussing it, and we can continue exclusively immanently—categorizing and studying the sensory experience. For Nietzsche, this did not seem to be good enough, because this stance is just ignoring the concept of "the true world" without decomposing it; it still seems to be there, lurking behind the veil of sensations, haunting the weak ones and giving ill-fated hope against solipsism. As Heidegger puts it, "the vacant niche of the higher world remains" (Heidegger 1979, 207). With the fifth paragraph, Nietzsche launches the final death strike against the Great

Error and gives his argumentation in the following lines: "[A]n idea which is no longer good for anything, not even obligating—an idea which has become useless and superfluous—*consequently*, a refuted idea: let us abolish it!"

The argument that Nietzsche has compacted here is a combination of argumentation from Occam's razor and the argument to the best explanation. If an idea has no explanatory power (if it is "useless"), then we should not endorse it or adopt it into some sort of ontological book of the world, because we can get by with fewer things equally well. With equal explanatory powers, we should prefer a less complex theory (Occam's razor). And the idea of the "true world" as Nietzsche presents it is definitely such a "useless and superfluous" thing, because if something is unattainable or even unknown, then it cannot figure in explanations and cannot have any explanatory powers whatsoever. We can also express this dialectic as the argument to the best explanation: if the less complex theory explains things at least equally well, then it is a better explanation, and we should prefer the ontology of this better explanation. Thus, in short, Nietzsche's line of thought seems to be that if the existence of something does not have any explanatory benefits, then we should not posit it, and if we already have posited it for some reason (as happened with the concept of "the true world"), then we should undo the mistake and—due to the inference to the best explanation—express the destruction of it. So, we are forced to accept—indeed, in that sense, the emphasizing of "consequently" in Nietzsche's passage is appropriate—the conclusion: "Let us abolish it!"

Of course, despite the outcry, the adventures of "the true world" continued after Nietzsche. As already mentioned, logical positivism and various schools of philosophy of language continued outcasting metaphysics and the idea of the "true world" among others. In what follows, I offer an interpretation that provides some content to Nietzsche's line of thought running from the true world being characterised as unattainable and unknown to abolishing both the apparent and the true one. In particular, Hilary Putnam's model-theoretic arguments against realism and Kripke's Wittgensteinian paradox are interpreted as arguments that bring forth the pervading characteristics of the concept of true world as Nietzsche presents it—namely, that it is "unattainable", "indemonstrable", and "unknown". These characteristics were the main assumptions in reconstructing Nietzsche's argumentation as a combination of Occam's razor and the inference to the best explanation.

3.   The Putnamian argument against external realism

In order to have precise arguments, we must specify the concepts. How should we explicate the notion of "the true world"? As already mentioned,

the concept of the "true world" in Nietzsche's paragraphs (starting with Platonism) is most plausibly interpreted as the world that is potentially trans-empirical, or verification-transcendent, and independent. Since the recurring theme in the paragraphs is the question of attainability or expressibility, we can add that we should think of "the true world" in the context of the dichotomy of the subject and the object, the perceiver and the perceived, where the former is in the business of representing the latter. Thus, the concept of "the true world" is the idea that there is an independent world out there, which we can grasp and truthfully describe. In the context of Putnamian arguments, this is exactly the world view that is adopted by the *external realist*. To be more precise, this world view amounts to three principles, as it is explicated in the literature concerning Putnam's arguments (e.g. see Button 2013 as the recent comprehensive evaluation and vindication of the arguments):

1. The Independence Principle:
   The world is (largely) made up of objects that are mind-, language-, and theory-independent (Button 2013, 8);

2. The Correspondence Principle:
   Truth is a correspondence relation between words (or thought-signs) and external things (paraphrasing of Button 2013, 8);

3. The Cartesianism Principle:
   Even an ideal theory might be radically false (Button 2013, 10).

These three principles comprise the view of external realism—that there exists an external, independent world that we can more or less correctly describe, that is, to produce the models that would capture how the world is. Our models might be wrong, but with our epistemic capabilities we can hope to approach the true picture, and truth is defined as the correspondence between the intended model (of the best theory of the world) and the world as it really is. Since the world itself is independent and distinguished from our representations of it, the possibility opens for different sceptical scenarios or Cartesian nightmares—that the world is very different from how we think it is or how our best models describe it (the Cartesianism Principle). I take these three principles to be the idea behind Nietzsche's concept of the true world—that is the world the external realist would believe in.

Starting from the 1970s, Hilary Putnam has launched a line of arguments with a common idea of underdetermination of reference against external realism,[2] which are purported to show that the position is logically untenable

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[2] To be precise, Putnam labelled the position as metaphysical realism, but we need not be concerned with this terminological shift here.

(e.g. Putnam 1977; Putnam 1980). Due to their logical rigorousness, the arguments are powerful but also perhaps technically complex and employ a series of specific concepts from the model-theoretic framework. Fortunately, for the current purposes, we need not be concerned with the technicalities here, and the general idea behind Putnam's arguments (or paradox, as it is sometimes dubbed in the literature (see Lewis 1984)) is not hard to grasp.

Let us imagine that we are in possession of the best possible scientific theory of the world that meets all our imaginable constraints and qualifications—e.g., it is consistent, complete, predicts correctly all observation sentences for the past and the future (i.e., has adequate empirical content), it meets our criteria for a good explanation, it is elegant, simple, plausible etc. In short, it is epistemically and empirically ideal. Let us call it theory T. The heart of Putnam's argument against the external realist is to argue for the conclusion that there are necessarily many different ways to make theory T true—there are always several equal models or interpretations available. In other words, theory T indetermines how the world must be in order for the theory to be true. The *permutation argument* is one of the more intuitive ways to argue for this conclusion of indeterminacy (see Putnam 1981, 33–35, 217–218). In short, if we have an ideal theory T in some form of symbolic representation, then we can permute the referents of these symbols such that T has many models that make exactly the same sentences of T true. As Tim Button suggests, we can envision it like this:

> Imagine that we were to lay out all the objects in the world, together with various labels (names) for them, and with other labels (predicates) for collections of them. Suppose we now shuffle the objects around. So long as we do not disturb the labels, exactly the same sentences will come out as true after the shuffling as were true before the shuffling. (Button 2013, 14–15)

And since exactly the same sentences are true, there is no way to prefer one model or interpretation to others as the true one. At first sight there are several proposals available how to set down a constraint that would restrict the range of different models to one, such that theory T would still determine one way how the world is. E.g., one can argue that the causal theory of reference restricts the range of the referents of the symbols of theory T, and thus blocks the permutation argument. However, there is a neat manoeuvre in Putnam's arsenal to account for these counter-arguments. This is called the "just more theory"-manoeuvre or JMT (see Putnam 1977, 486–487; Putnam 1980, 477; Button 2013, Ch. 4). The point is that whatever further constraints one might presuppose, all these must be expressed constraints that also belong to the total theory of the world and are therefore a part of the T itself. And being that, the permutation argument applies for the expres-

sions of the constraints themselves as well. In whatever terms the constraints are stated or whatever verificational terms used for purportedly determining one intended model, e.g., 'see', 'measure', 'reference', 'constraints', etc., we can always permute the referents. Thus, the epidemic of plurality of models spreads again.

And for an external realist or proponent of some form of the idea of "the true world", this result is extremely unsettling. Why? Firstly, if even an *epistemically and empirically ideal* theory is in principle incapable of determining how the world might be, that is, it has many true models, then any theory in any language is principally *insufficient* to determine the correct reference and correspondence relation that the external realist has in mind in his Correspondence principle. There is no point in adhering to this principle if you cannot possibly distinguish one intended model from the unintended ones. All are equally true. Secondly, since for every empirically correct and logically consistent theory T, there is a model that makes this theory true, then there is no sense to hold at the same time that theory T might be false. We are empirically enclosed to our observation sentences and their relations to each other, and once we get the empirically ideal theory, in what sense can it be false? Thus, there goes Cartesianism Principle.

The previous paragraphs were a short reminder to the reader how the standard setup of Putnam's argument works. However, before turning to the issue of interpreting Nietzsche, we should look more carefully what exactly is the conclusion that we can draw from Putnam's argument. Putnam himself claimed that this leads to the incoherency of external realism (or metaphysical realism in Putnam's lingo) (Putnam 1977, 483). Reception of the arguments has also followed these lines, namely it has forced us to concede the falsity and/or incoherency of external realism or to look for ways to block the argument (e.g., that it is question-begging). However, I claim that in a more precise treatment, what the argument forces us to accept is the disjunction: every stated theory T is false or it is devoid of any expressible empirical content.[3] That means that without further considerations it does not force upon us the conclusion of outright falsity of realism, but rather that it is either false or somewhat mystical.

In order to see how the disjunction is forced upon the external realist, we must recognize that the dialectical situation in the dispute between the external realist and the Putnamian sceptic is a burden of proof dilemma. In the current context, the burden of proof is on the external realist. The dialec-

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[3] This differs slightly from Button's claim that Putnam's argument forces the externalist to face the following dilemma: either external realism is *incoherent*, or its reference fixing theory is necessarily devoid of any empirical content and has to appeal to magic (Button 2013, 62).

tics of the argument is that the Putnamian sceptic proposes the challenge to the external realist: he must prove that he can somehow restrict the models of theory T. For every answer that the realist might give, the sceptic strikes in turn: theory T (as stated) with alleged constraints does not restrict the interpretations because constraints are "just more theory". We can describe the dialectics starting with the proposal of the external realist and letting him state the position and arguments. Then we force him to face the dilemma.

1. External realism: there is a theory T with suitable reference constraint claims such that there can only be one correct interpretation of T.

2. Theory T has adequate empirical content.

3. Permutation thesis + JMT manoeuvre entail that if T has some empirical content (2nd claim), then this content can be interpreted in several ways, and there is no (one) correct interpretation for that content (rejection of the first claim).

4. Assuming that the conditional third claim is true, we must just ask what true and false combinations of 1. and 2. make the conditional true. The conditional can be true only in cases in which the first claim is false or the second claim is false.

Conclusion: assuming that the third claim holds, the external realist position must be false OR it must be devoid of any empirical content. The external realist must fall into silence in the sense that he cannot state to have any empirical content for his theory T.[4]

Thus, we have a situation where we cannot strictly establish the falsity of the external realist. The realist might be right, but only in the case when he does not state any empirical content for his reference constraint claims. After all, it still seems possible that the world is such that the referents of our words are somehow determined and that there is only one intended interpretation. But as soon as a theorist starts to argue for his position, that is, starts to give some empirical content for his theory T (e.g., making predictions that can be observed), he falls into the trap of "just more theory" and redeems his position false. That is why Putnam claimed that the only way

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[4] This interpretation (as Button's) of Putnam's argument avoids the standard accusations of question-beggingness. If the burden of proof is laid upon the external realist, then it can be shown that he has to accept the disjunction and there is no question-beggingness involved. The question-beggingness accusations are appropriate in the situation where the burden of proof is on the Putnamian sceptic (for proving that the reference cannot be fixed). Further elaboration of the issue is out of the scope of this article.

for an external realist to avoid the argument is to postulate some "magical" theories of reference (see e.g., Putnam 1981, 3–5; Button 2013, 31). Therefore, in sum, the conclusion that we can draw from Putnam's argument is that external realism (if not false) lacks any expressible empirical content and is in that sense mystical. As soon as the external realist starts arguing for his theory T on the grounds of some testable empirical connections (and not just postulating some mystical referent constraints), it can be shown that T is false—in the sense of empirical content, he renders T inexpressible. And that is exactly how we should interpret Nietzsche's phrasing that "the true world" is "unattainable" and "indemonstrable".

4.   Kripkensteinian scepticism as an attack against external realism

Now we turn to Kripke's Wittgensteinian argument and interpret this as another attack against the "true world". While Putnam's argumentation stemmed from the scepticism about reference—it is indeterminate to what our terms refer to—, then this section concerns the scepticism about meaning —it is principally indeterminate what our words mean.

Saul Kripke's interpretation of Wittgenstein's arguments in *Philosophical Investigations* in *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language* (Kripke 1982) comprises a block of arguments for scepticism about meaning. The arguments and the position are labelled by the portmanteau "Kripkensteinian scepticism". It is the claim that there are no facts of the matter about the meaning of the statements that ascribe meanings, or in other words, ascriptions of meaning do not possess objective truth-conditions and therefore cannot be truth-apt.

The Kripkensteinian sceptic illustrates the reasoning that leads to this conclusion with an arithmetical example (Kripke 1982, 7–9). Suppose that you have never added numbers greater than 50 before, and you are asked to calculate the sum of 68 + 57. The problem is that no fact of the past usage of the addition function determines '125' as the right answer, because the facts about the past usage are compatible of an infinite amount of functions that would yield a different answer than the correct one. For example, your previous use of the 'plus' is compatible of the 'quus' function:

$$x \text{ quus } y = x + y \text{ if } x, y < 57; \text{ and 5 otherwise.}$$

So, there seems to be no fact of the matter on the grounds of the past usage whether the correct answer is 125 or 5, and thus the correct meaning of the 'plus' sign—whether its *addition* or *quaddition* (quus-function). The past usage of the sign does not determine the correct usages for the future, but the meaning of an expression should provide such a criterion. The obvious ob-

jection that, what was meant by 'addition' was not defined by a finite number of examples but by a general rule or algorithm, is rejected by the sceptic on similar grounds (Kripke 1982, 16). The terms used in defining the rule or algorithm are also subjected to incompatible interpretations, and the problem simply emerges on a next level. As Wittgenstein himself puts it: "Any interpretation still hangs in the air along with what it interprets, and cannot give it any support. Interpretations by themselves do not determine meaning" (Wittgenstein 2001, §198a). The Kripkensteinian sceptic (in Kripke 1982) discusses several other *prima facie* plausible solutions and argues that all these fall short of determining the meaning of meaning-ascriptions. Thus, the Kripkensteinian sceptical conclusion is that there seems to be no meaning-constituting facts that help to determine whether we mean *addition* or *quaddition* by the '+' sign.

In order to see how this is relevant in the context of this essay, let us put the Kripkensteinian argument in a concise form. The point of attack of the Kripkensteinian sceptic is the factualism or realism regarding meaning, which can be expressed as follows (see, e.g., Boghossian 1989, 524):

(1) For some S, p: 'S means that p' is objectively truth-conditional.[5]

In order to argue for (1), a factualist must come up with an acceptable truth-condition TC for 'S means that p'. And, consequently, Kripkensteinian sceptic argues that:

(2) For any purported truth-condition TC, there exists p' such that 'S means that p'' is true, and p and p' are incompatible (e.g., *addition* and *quaddition*).

(3) From (2), since p and p' are incompatible, no TC can be a truth condition for 'S means that p'.

We can run this argument for any S and p, therefore:

(4) For any S, p: 'S means that p' is not objectively truth-conditional.

So we have arrived at the non-factualist conclusion that meaning ascriptions cannot have objective/realist truth-conditions. This sceptical situation is bizarre, to say the least, and it certainly clashes with our intuitions to some extent. It seems reasonable to hope that we reckon every-day objective situations where '+' sign means *addition* and not anything else.

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[5] Here and in the following formulations, "S" is a bearer of meaningful content (e.g., a symbol, a sentence or a thought) and p designates that meaning or content.

How is this sceptical result problematic for the external realist or for "the true world" adherer? Notice how the principles of external realism imply that the sentences of a discourse possess objective truth-conditions. The truth-condition of a sentence is the situation when the sentence is true. For an external realist, a declarative sentence about the world is about the objects that are independent from the language (Independence principle), and it is true precisely when those independent objects are such as the sentence declares them to be (Correspondence principle). But, in order for an external realist to be able to present true sentences in a theory T that are *about* the external world, the relevant sentences that ascribe meanings must also be capable of being true in the external realist sense—that is, subject to the Correspondence principle. But since the latter is defined as some relation between words and external things, it follows that the realist's meaning-ascriptions must also have objective, or external, truth-conditions. Therefore, he seems to be forced to adopt the factualist thesis of

(1) For some S, *p*: 'S means that *p*' is objectively truth-conditional,

which was the point of attack of Kripkensteinian sceptic. Thus, it seems that the external realist position implies the factualist position regarding meaning. Therefore, by contraposition, if we must concede to the non-factualist position of meaning, the external realist position must also go.

Again, we must be careful to what exactly the Kripkensteinian argument amounts to. The sceptical argument by itself, without further considerations, does not establish that there is no external, metaphysically independent world. What is established is the strong scepticism regarding the possibility to talk *about* the external world—since meaning-ascriptions do not have objective truth-conditions, they also cannot be objectively true in the external realist sense. So as with Putnam's argument, the external, or true world becomes inexpressible and rather mystical in nature, it fades away into unattainable silence. And that, again, is the sense how we should interpret Nietzsche's claims that the true world is "unattainable" and "indemonstrable".

But in addition to being "unattainable" and "indemonstrable", the Kripkensteinian also gives us an account how we should understand the third word in Nietzsche's lingo, namely that the "true world" is also "unknown". Regarding Putnam's arguments, one might argue that, since there is possibly some magical reference relation between words and the world, we might also have some magical powers to grasp, or know things *about* the world. Be that as it may, Kripkensteinian arguments undermine even that sort of esoteric. Kripke (1982, 14) stresses that there are no behaviourist limitations to what can be accounted for answering the Kripkensteinian sceptic. In that regard,

"objective truth-conditions" account for both external and inner observable facts. That means that it is legitimate to attempt to block the sceptical conclusion by relying on some inner or introspective facts. But the sceptical argument works just the same in that case as well. As Kripke puts it, even if God were looking into my mind, "he still could not determine that I meant addition by 'plus'" (Kripke 1982, 14). Whatever one might *think* or *grasp* or *comprehend*, magically or otherwise, what the meanings of his/her sentences might be, it still does not suffice to determine the meaning-ascription's truth-conditions. Whatever the external realist might think, this still cannot ensure that his thoughts—however mystically they have appeared—are *about* the external world, as he needs them to be. Therefore, in the light of Kripkensteinian scepticism, the "true world" is not only unattainable or indemonstrable, but, indeed, also "unknown".

Let us summarize. In this section, we saw that the concept of "the true world" implies a situation that forces us to adopt a factualist position regarding meaning. But we also saw how the Kripkensteinian argument leads to the conclusion that the factualist position regarding meaning does not have sufficient resources to defend itself against the intrusion of meaning-scepticism. That is, our representational systems and mechanisms ascribing meanings to them cannot have objective truth-conditions (as inner or external observable states of affairs) that the external realist needs to have in order to maintain the tenability of his world-view (in the sense of preserving the falsifiable empirical content).

So far the arguments presented here function as a precision of the sense behind Nietzsche's repeated exclamations that "the true world" is "unattainable, indemonstrable, unknown". And thus, we have arrived at the point where we have set up the scene for evaluating Nietzsche's conclusion that we have abolished both the true and the apparent world.

5.   The aftermath: The end of an error

The full last paragraph of Nietzsche's *The History of an Error* (Nietzsche 1954, 486) states:

> 6. The true world—we have abolished. What world has remained? The apparent one perhaps? But no! *With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one.* (Noon; moment of the briefest shadow; end of the longest error; high point of humanity; INCIPIT ZARATHUS-TRA.)

As before, we must clarify the concepts. Nietzsche contrasts the true world with the apparent one; this opposition defines the poles of the polarization. So, naturally, in our interpretation scheme, we must ask what is the opposition to external realism? In the context of Putnam's argument,

the opposition to external realism is most notably Putnam's own view in the 1970s—*internal realism* or *nonrealism*, which adopts the verificationist theory of understanding and threatens to collapse into subjective idealism, as argued by Button (2013, 80). Indeed, subjective idealism contrasts straightforwardly with external realism. According to the former, there is no external, mind- or theory-independent world, even the possibility to pose the question about external objects is a misunderstanding. Everything that can be talked about is immanent; our theories cannot be radically wrong because in the case of total immanence, every claim is a tautology or a solipsistic truth.

In the discourse concerning Kripkensteinian scepticism, the opposition to factualism regarding the truth-conditions of the meaning ascriptions is standardly referred to as non-factualism or anti-realism, which minimally amounts to denying (1) and adopting (4) of the third section. Without going further into these debates, I am going to call the opposition in both contexts as the polarization between realism and non-realism.

Given these specifications, how should we interpret the claim "*With the true world we have also abolished the apparent one*"? Interestingly, there is a position on the current landscape of theoretical philosophy that arises from the situation in which we feel compelled to reject, or "abolish", both realism and non-realism (or the true and the apparent world). That position is *quietism* which is defined as the viewpoint according to which a significant metaphysical debate between realism and nonrealism is impossible (see, e.g., Wright 1992, 202; Miller 2007, 335–337). Since the debate is impossible, debaters on the field must fall into silence. Quietism argues for the impossibility, or at least for the insignificance, of the polarization between realism and non-realism, and if successful, pulls the rug from under the traditional philosophical opposition and ends these debates as being nonsensical or pointless. This seems, then, to be the end of philosophical thinking about the true world, which Nietzsche would have very much appreciated.

What would be the arguments for quietism? There are various, but for our story arc, it would be fittest to find arguments that would stem from Putnamian and Kripkensteinian scepticism. In the context of Putnamian arguments, we can see quietism rising when we try to cope with the dire consequences left from Putnam's paradox. Having to abandon external realism, and not wanting to fall all the way to the diametrical opposition of subjective idealism, the natural question, presenting itself as the real question of the paradox, arises: where exactly should we land between the poles of realism and nonrealism? This is exactly the question that Tim Button (2013) seeks the answer for. But, unfortunately, this question turns out to be an aporia.

Button argues that the factor that determines the acceptable location on the spectrum between realism vs nonrealism is the level of how much Cartesian scepticism we can tolerate (Button 2013, Ch. 16). Internal realism, or nonrealism, is the position where every Cartesian sceptical scenario can be defeated, and realism being the position where the most severe Cartesian nightmares are possible. Hence, the ultimate question is how severe Cartesian scepticism is allowed by our logic and rules of language. Famously, Putnam has argued (e.g., Putnam 1981) that some extreme sceptical scenarios— especially so-called extreme brain-in-a-vat hypotheses—are not possible because they turn meaningless if applied to ourselves. But others, less severe sceptical scenarios which are immune to Putnam's brain-in-a-vat considerations seem possible (see, e.g., Button 2013, Ch. 15). And Button argues that we are not able to decide exactly and conclusively how severe sceptical scenarios are possible. It is impossible to decide because ultimately the decision turns to the clashing intuitions about sceptical scenarios, which are quite complicated and trigger specific intuitions only for philosophers who work in that specific field (Button 2013, Ch. 16). Intuitions can work as an evidence or counter-evidence for a theory if they are sufficiently easy to collect and to be revealed, preferably also for and on laymen. But intuitions concerning very specific scenarios tend to lose their epistemic value as they are just some specific fantasies of a trained philosopher. Thus, the disagreement is unsolvable in principle; its epistemic value is merely clashing opinions. And we are forced to conclude with Button that the whole project of localizing ourselves in our spectrum is doomed to fail:

> For all of these reasons, I am unable to take seriously the project of discovering the intricate principles that will deliver a precise verdict on every single brain-in-a-vat-style argument. Moreover, even if someone did think that they had landed somewhere in particular on the spectrum between internal realism and external realism, and could offer us a very precise verdict on exactly how much scepticism to take seriously, I would urge them to treat their own reaction with a heavy dose of ironic detachment. (Button 2013, 167)

What is, then, left for the traditional metaphysical debate between realism and non-realism? Button thinks we should give up:

> When, then, is the question of "traditional metaphysics" to be tolerated, and when is it to be ruled out? To demand a *precise* answer to that question is to demand that we position ourselves somewhere *precise* between the two poles of external and internal realism. And I have argued that we cannot do that.
>
> The same point could be expressed as follows: *We must collapse the dichotomy between internal and external questions.* Not because the

analytic/synthetic dichotomy has collapsed (the Quinean objection to Carnap) but because the dichotomy between representable and un-representable sceptical possibilities has collapsed. It may sometimes be useful to think of certain questions as more internal or more external, but there is no sharp line, drawn once and for all, where internal ends and external begins. The very idea of an internal/external dichotomy must be surrendered, for it is a *meta*metaphysical bogey. (Button 2013, 178)

And, for an ultimate conclusion, Button advices us to directly "shut up!" (Button 2013, 175) regarding the question of how much realism we should give up and how much subjective idealism to avoid.

From the quotes above, it should be clear that Button has argued himself into the quietist standpoint *par excellence*, although he never explicitly mentions quietism in his book. Thus, trying to give a serious and analytically sound answer to Putnam's argument, we have found—following Button's argumentation—ourselves in an aporia where the precise answer is impossible and we should surrender. This finalizes our interpretation of Nietzsche's "*with the true world we have also abolished the apparent one*" inspired by Putnam's argument.

In order to get a full circle, we have only one last issue to deliver. That is the question how does the conclusion of Kripkensteinian argumentation stated in (4) bring on the threat of quietism?

We can observe that, since the truth-conditions of any sentence are at least partly a function of its meaning and according to (4) there are no objective truth-conditions for meaning-ascriptions, then it follows that there are no objective truth-conditions for sentences that ascribe truth-conditions either. That is, there is no discourse about sentences' truth-conditions that would possess objective truth-conditions. But the debate between realism and non-realism is precisely the debate between the ones who think that the discourse at hand possesses genuine, or objective, truth-conditions and the ones—the non-realists—who are denying that one way or another (see, e.g., Miller 2007, 307). But if the distinction itself possesses no objective truth-conditions, then the metaphysical contrast that would define the opposition will be endangered (see Miller 2007, 336). The distinction between the realist and the non-realist collapses; the conditions for the debate are undermined. These considerations would force us to accept the quietist standpoint as defined—that some metaphysically significant debate between realism and nonrealism is impossible. Or, again, in Nietzsche's parallel interpretation—abolishing the "true world" as inexpressible or unknown by Kripkensteinian arguments, we have also abolished the "apparent world" as the opposition has no metaphysical significance anymore.

Another way to cope with this effect that scepticism regarding meaning-ascriptions spreads to ascriptions of truth-condition as well is to adopt the two-level truth system *à la* Wright (1992). This means that, although the debate itself—that is, whether a given discourse possesses objective truth-conditions or not—cannot be held in terms of objective truth-conditions, the debate can still be held on another truth-level which we might call the minimal truth. The latter can be defined in terms of some assertibility conditions in a given language game or perhaps as a valid move in a language game of giving and asking reasons (as in Brandom 1994). If we adopt this minimal or deflationary perspective in interpreting Nietzsche, then we start see him as a pragmatist, at least regarding the semantical relations.

Thus, in conclusion, there seems to be two ways left for Nietzsche according to our interpretation of the sixth paragraph—quietism or semantic pragmatism. Regarding the quietist perspective, we should tread lightly—the "INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA" or "Zarathustra begins" is clearly meant to state that, at the end of an error, Nietzsche's own philosophy begins—instead of being quiet (or following Button's advice to shut up), he tries to take it to the next level. But nevertheless—perhaps looking for the next level and abandoning the classical opposition between the true and the apparent world also means falling into silence regarding the classical metaphysical debate between realism and non-realism as being hopelessly an issue of the abandoned level. The second option is to focus on Nietzsche as a semantic pragmatist who rejects the idea of semantic relations as some substantial word-to-world relations and prefers to explain meanings through use without any substantial metaphysical commitments. And it should be noted that quietism and semantic pragmatism are in no way mutually exclusive perspectives; just their focuses are different. As a final note, we can go even further—perhaps we should make a bold move in our interpretive game and interpret the prospect of the minimal or deflationary truth (however we might define it, it must be decisively different from the objective truth which must be abandoned along with the opposition between the true and the apparent world) as something that is embraced by *Übermensch*—the global pragmatist regarding the semantics foreseen by Nietzsche. That would be the end of the Grand Error, or overcoming of Platonism—the sixth and last stroke in Nietzsche's *The History of an Error*.

6. Conclusion

In our interpretation of Nietzsche's *The History of an Error* with the help of and inspiration by Putnam's and Kripkenstein's arguments, the phrase "the true world" was interpreted as the world that the external realist believes in. As I argued, the external realist must also accept semantical realism and

is thus vulnerable to Kripkensteinian arguments. The core idea that paralleled between these philosophers was the thought that the true world, or the external realism, is inexpressible in the sense that it becomes unattainably mystical. The inexpressibility or unattainability that is meant here goes deep—in the sense that it is not only that we cannot talk about it, but we also cannot even coherently think or grasp it. Kripkensteinian scepticism also applies to introspective facts and not only to meaning-fixing facts of spoken language, and thus, it established that there is no determined way to think about the "true world" in the sense the concept itself (being cashed out as external realism) demands us. These interpretations served as a precision of the sense behind Nietzsche's repeated exclamations that "the true world" is "unattainable, indemonstrable, unknown". These arguments gave rise to the quietist position that a meaningful debate between external realism and its opposition is impossible. That upshot might lure us to push Nietzsche to the quietist position—which seems far-fetched. Rather we should see his outcry for abolishing both the true and the apparent world as looking for some other level of truth—minimal truth perhaps with some global pragmatists' or expressivists' attitudes.

Regarding the issue of abolishing, I would like to finish this philosophical-interpretative game addressing the recurring doubt that might lurk behind the Putnamian and Kripkensteinian thinking—that there might still be some aspects of reality or something that is inexpressible or ineffable even in a deep sense. I do not think that is possible—all the attempts to express or think about such a situation or state of affairs fail to convey the meaning they are supposed to. These attempts either express the situation where we act *as if* the situation is ineffable (but it really is not), or express some feeling of metaphysical anxiety, or are just plain gibberish. It is how the words 'there', 'be', 'meaning', 'reality' etc., work in our language. And on the other hand, we can also launch, as Nietzsche did, the arguments from Occam's razor and to the best explanation again. Inexpressible things cannot do any explanatory work—and without that there is no reason to adopt them into the worldview. That being the case, we might equivalently claim that it is just not there. But exactly due to that recurring doubt, Nietzsche calls us to "abolish it", instead of merely claiming the non-existence of it.

Acknowledgements

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