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## Book Review (reviewing Maudemarie Clark, Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy (1990))

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Neuhouser's interpretation has a certain "willful" quality. Having equated self-positing activity and intellectual intuition, for example, he treats them as simply identical. He consistently reads Fichte's talk of the self's "activity" as a reference to "structures in consciousness," as if there were no alternative readings. He thereby tends to miss the senses in which Fichte (like Kant) attributes a kind of "formative power" to the self in its original act, and the implications of this attribution for the self's "practical" nature. Thus, in his chapter on Fichte's account of practical selfhood, Neuhouser is very interesting on the topic of how intellectual intuition renders the self "autonomous," and causally independent, but has little to say about the self's active self-assertion. Not surprisingly, then, his discussion of the notion of "striving" is as weak as his account of intellectual intuition is strong.

Altogether, Neuhouser has written a highly focused, if occasionally myopic, very informative and illuminating study, valuable even to students of Fichte who will find important fault with some of its main theses.

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Maudemarie Clark. *Nietzsche on Truth and Philosophy*. Modern European Philosophy. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990. Pp. xiv + 298. Cloth, \$39.50. Paper, \$12.95.

Chapters 1 through 4 of Maudemarie Clark's important book offer a rich elaboration of some ideas first suggested schematically by John Wilcox<sup>1</sup>: I will call them the Epistemological Thesis (ET) and the Developmental Thesis (DT). According to Clark's ET, the "mature" Nietzsche believed we could have knowledge of the truth because he accepted (though not in these terms): (i) the "minimal correspondence theory" of truth: "Snow is white" is true (in a language L) iff snow is white; and (ii) that truth is epistemically constrained. Thus (to simplify a bit), since "snow is white" is true if and only if snow is white; and since whether snow is, in fact, white, cannot outstrip "our best standards of rational acceptability" (60) for beliefs concerning the whiteness of snow, it is possible for us to have knowledge of the truth-value of the proposition "snow is white."

According to the DT, Nietzsche's view of truth changed during his career. In the early essay "On Truth and Lie in an Extra-Moral Sense" (1873), he accepted the "metaphysical correspondence theory, the conception of truth as correspondence to the thing-in-itself" (22). Because, under the influence of Schopenhauer, he thought we had no knowledge of things-in-themselves, he accepted the Falsification Thesis (FT): our merely "human" knowledge necessarily falsifies what the world is really like in itself. By the early 1880s, Nietzsche came to reject the idea of the thing-in-itself as incoherent. Yet he continued to accept the FT because he continued to accept the Schopenhauerian Representational Theory of Knowledge (RTK), according to which

<sup>1</sup> *Truth and Value in Nietzsche* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1974), esp. 123-24.

our knowledge is of “representations” of things, not things themselves. Only in his final six works, beginning with the *Genealogy* in 1887, does Nietzsche reject the RTK and come to realize that his rejection of the thing-in-itself in earlier works should lead him to the ET; this is why, Clark claims, we do not find the FT in any of these late works.

In Chapters 5 and 6, Clark shows how Nietzsche’s perspectivism and his criticism of the pursuit of truth as an ascetic ideal are, in fact, compatible with his own belief in the possibility of truth. In Chapters 7 and 8, she argues that will to power and eternal recurrence are consistent with Nietzsche’s rejection of metaphysics, because rather than being metaphysical doctrines, they are simply the foundations of an alternative *ideal* to the ascetic ideal. Clark’s discussion of will to power is especially provocative, and will repay careful study.

Let me venture four critical comments. (1) Against commentators (from Danto to Derrida) who contend that Nietzsche did deny the existence of truth, Clark notes that this “apparent nihilism in regard to truth . . . threatens the coherence of his critique of morality . . . insofar as the latter commits Nietzsche to certain truths while at the same time it denies that there are any truths” (4). Yet Nietzsche makes such criticisms as early as *Dawn*, when, even on Clark’s DT, he was still committed to the FT—thus presenting the specter of incoherence again.

(2) Clark assimilates Nietzsche’s perspectivism to a sort of holism: “how things will look to us intellectually in any situation—how we are justified in interpreting them—depends on ‘where we’re at’, that is, on what we already believe” (130). Yet in the *Genealogy* (III, 12), Nietzsche claims that what determines our perspectives is our “affects” or drives; he does not seem to assign any role to our other beliefs.<sup>2</sup>

(3) Clark’s neo-Kantian Nietzsche accepts that truth is independent of our “cognitive capacities (of what we can in principle verify)” (48), but denies that it is independent of our “cognitive interests,” that is “our best standards of rational acceptability” (60). This distinction, however, will collapse if one thinks that verifiability is a necessary (but not sufficient) condition for acceptability—our “best standards of rational acceptability” will just include, then, “verifiability.” (Clark argues, not persuasively to my mind, against such a reading of Nietzsche.)

(4) Clark’s historical scholarship is selective: much is said about the influence of Schopenhauer, for example, but nothing about the influence of the Presocratics, whom Nietzsche so admired and whose very different view of truth he often seems to echo.

Clark brings a welcome argumentative engagement to her reading of the texts, and her treatment of the philosophical issues constitutes a significant improvement over what has been typical in the Nietzsche literature. The book is, at times, less sharply focussed than it might have been—partly because of Clark’s lengthy discussions of the views of other commentators (though, oddly, she omits any mention of Jean Granier’s *Le Problème de la vérité dans la philosophie de Nietzsche*<sup>3</sup>); partly because of some belabored discussions, like the chapter on theories of truth.

<sup>2</sup>See my “Perspectivism in Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*,” in R. Schacht, ed., *Nietzsche, Genealogy, Morality* (Berkeley: University of California Press, forthcoming), sect. IV.

<sup>3</sup>(Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1966).

None of these critical comments should obscure the fact that this book is a major contribution to Nietzsche studies. Indeed, of the many books written on Nietzsche over the last ninety years, Clark's study must rank as one of the three or four most intelligent and rewarding. All students of Nietzsche will learn from reading this valuable work.

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Robert B. Westbrook. *John Dewey and American Democracy*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991. Pp. xix + 570. Cloth, \$29.95.

When James Gouinlock's *John Dewey's Philosophy of Value* appeared in 1972, it commanded a field virtually empty of any extended treatments of Dewey's thought.<sup>1</sup> Twenty years later, over a dozen major volumes have appeared, from intellectual biographies to studies of his metaphysics, logic, aesthetics, philosophy of technology, and philosophy of religion.<sup>2</sup> Westbrook's contribution, which is both a political biography and an inquiry into Dewey's philosophy of democracy, may be one of the most important. It is certainly the best book treating Dewey's role in American history. I think it is also the best general introduction to Dewey's thought as a whole. And while I have a few points of contention, I will begin by simply stating that Westbrook, an assistant professor of history at the University of Rochester, has produced nothing short of a masterpiece. If it exerts its proper influence, it will serve to educate historians, social theorists, political scientists, educators, and, last but not least, philosophers about Dewey, his troublesome heritage, and the unfinished task of democracy still before us.

Westbrook recognizes that the full biography of Dewey remains to be written. He has focused on "Dewey's career as an advocate of democracy" because "his democratic theory goes to the heart of his philosophy" (x-xi). Insofar as this includes Dewey's complex philosophical anthropology, this is true. The purpose is that "it is high time to reassess [Dewey's] place in the history of modern American culture" (xiii). Against the dominant view, which sees Dewey as a major influence in the formation of modern, liberalism, Westbrook argues that Dewey's impact has actually been rather limited. "It is more accurate to see Dewey as a minority, not a majority spokesman within the liberal community, a social philosopher whose democratic vision failed to find a secure place in liberal ideology—in short, a more radical voice than has been generally as-

<sup>1</sup>The major exception to this was Gérard Deledalle's important *L'Idée d'expérience dans la philosophie de John Dewey* (1967).

<sup>2</sup>Among such studies should be mentioned: George Dykhuizen's *The Life and Mind of John Dewey* (1973), Victor Kestenbaum's *The Phenomenological Sense of John Dewey* (1978), Ralph Sleeper's *The Necessity of Pragmatism* (1986), my own *John Dewey's Theory of Art, Experience and Nature: The Horizons of Feeling* (1987), Raymond Boisvert's *Dewey's Metaphysics* (1988), Larry Hickman's *John Dewey's Pragmatic Technology* (1990), and Steven Rockefeller's *John Dewey: Religious Faith and Democratic Humanism* (1991).