

Nietzsche on Taste: Epistemic Privilege and Anti-Realism

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ABSTRACT *The central aim of this article is to argue that Nietzsche takes his own taste, and those in the relevant sense similar to it, to enjoy a kind of epistemic privilege over their rivals. Section I will examine the textual evidence for an anti-realist reading of Nietzsche on taste. Section II will then provide an account of taste as an ‘affective evaluative sensibility’ (AES), asking whether taste so understood supports an anti-realist reading. I will argue that it does not and that we should resist construing the affects (Affeke), which constitute taste for Nietzsche, as no more than Humean subjective preferences. Section III will then consider passages in which Nietzsche makes a connection between taste and epistemic considerations, suggesting that he appears to situate the epistemic privilege of his taste in a more fundamental method of evaluative disclosure, namely pre-reflective affective responses. Finally, Section IV will argue that we can make sense of how such affective responses could provide us with evaluative knowledge by narrowing the scope of the objects of Nietzsche’s taste to other affective-evaluative states, such that the affective responses are meta-affective evaluations. On the basis of this idea I construct a theory of meta-affective responses providing their subjects with access to the intrinsic phenomenal value of other affective-evaluative states, and then go on to show how Nietzsche can be read as applying this theory in a number of passages.*

Introduction

That Nietzsche’s evaluative commitments are frequently expressed in an idiom which appears to be broadly aesthetic in character is one of the distinctive features of his philosophy. More specifically, and as often noted by commentators, he takes many evaluative judgements, both those he is in favour of and those he is not, to be either reducible to or expressive of a certain kind of taste (*Geschmack*). For example, he says that ‘opinions along with proofs, refutations, and the whole intellectual masquerade are only symptoms of a changed taste and most certainly not what they are so often taken to be, its causes’,¹ and

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that 'good taste needs to have provided you with a principle of selection for company, location, clothing...'² i.e. a standard of selection with regard to putative first-order goods. Elsewhere he claims that 'we must do away with the bad taste of wanting to be in agreement with the majority. "Good" is no longer good when it comes from your neighbor's mouth',³ and criticizes Wagner for have 'ruined taste', saying that he exemplifies a 'corrupted taste'.⁴ One interpretative claim motivated by such passages is that an instance of a particular taste for Nietzsche is synonymous with an evaluative perspective. As such, his use of the term seems to extend beyond a narrowly aesthetic focus, which would be primarily concerned with art-works as the traditional objects of judgements of taste.⁵

The central aim of this article is to argue that Nietzsche takes his own taste, and those in the relevant sense similar to it, to enjoy epistemic privilege over their rivals. This involves the taste in question being shown to be either (a) true or (b) in possession of better justification, where we are typically guided by the thought that rational justification improves the chances of the view in question turning out to be true. It will be argued that tastes which enjoy epistemic privilege in this way can be thought to possess a kind of (defeasible) evaluative knowledge. However, this thesis should not be confused with a number of related claims.

Firstly, I am not claiming that epistemic privilege is the only criterion for determining whether a taste is to be termed 'good' or 'bad', 'refined' or 'corrupted' etc., for Nietzsche, since a number of other features may also be required to warrant such labels. In this sense I am not denying that for Nietzsche particular tastes may enjoy privilege along non-epistemic lines, although what those criteria are is not my concern here. Secondly, I will not be arguing for the claim that Nietzsche thinks anyone can develop a taste that enjoys epistemic privilege. It might be that he thinks natural facts about persons determine evaluative perspectives and trajectories in such a way that the majority of human beings are constitutively incapable

¹Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 39. When citing Nietzsche's texts I state the relevant work, followed by the number of the passage. In cases where there are multiple sections I first cite, in Roman Numerals, the relevant section number and then the passage number (e.g., III:13). In the case of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* I cite the section name rather than the section number.

²Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* VIII:47.

³Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 43

⁴Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner* Preface. In a similar vein Nietzsche often appeals to a range of other sensory modalities, most prominently smell, as providing the grounds for many of his evaluative judgements (see *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 'On the New Idol', *Beyond Good and Evil* 30, 52, 213, 296, *On the Genealogy of Morality* I:14, III:14, *The Anti-Christ* 59, *Twilight of the Idols* VIII:20, *Ecce Homo* I:1, I:8, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* 11[375]).

⁵Nietzsche should not be thought of as directly contributing to the debate between Humeans and Kantians as to what status to accord the judgements of taste concerning art-works (see Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgement*, and Hume, *Of the Standard of Taste*). Although there are certain parallels between Nietzsche's view of taste (as I interpret it) and Kant's (see fn.53).

of realizing such a 'good' or 'refined' taste.⁶ Rather, I am interested in what those who have 'good' Nietzschean taste are doing if they are getting something epistemically right, and we can provide an account of this even if it turns out that the nature of the error for those whose taste gets things epistemically wrong is not, for whatever reason, amenable to self-directed correction. Thirdly, questions about the privilege Nietzsche's evaluative perspective may enjoy have often been framed in terms of his critique of morality, that is his demand that 'the value of these values [namely those he associates with Judeo-Christian morality and what he takes to be its secular descendants] should itself...be examined'.⁷ With regard to this project commentators have been interested in the status of the 'assessing values' in light of which the values of morality, in Nietzsche's pejorative sense of the term, are to be re-evaluated.⁸ This article will not provide an answer to what role a taste that enjoys epistemic privilege might play in that project.

Finally, it is worth noting that much of the debate about how understand taste in Nietzsche's thought turns on how we theorize the affective states (*Affekte*) that it will be argued constitute taste for him. More specifically the problem is how to best understand the evaluative content of such affects, which it will be suggested can be thought of as kinds of conscious emotions, in relation to their intentional objects. At present there are two main interpretative options. On the one hand there is Brian Leiter's Humean reading that takes affective-evaluations to be akin to world-independent Humean sentiments, where their evaluative content is specifiable at the personal level without reference to evaluative features as features of the objects of those states. On the other hand there is Peter Poellner's 'radical cognitivist' reading which argues that Nietzsche's affects can sometimes be thought to possess a distinctive kind of affective-intentionality, where the evaluative content of such affects, as disclosed through a felt phenomenology of attraction or repulsion, constitutively requires a reference to evaluative features as characterizing how that object itself is, as a 'registering of the objects nature'.⁹ This view aims to capture a distinctive feature of the phenomenology of affective-experiences, namely that in at least certain cases we experience our emotion as not merely contingently caused by its object (the Humean picture) but rather as (at least *prima facie*)

⁶See Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 39, *Beyond Good and Evil* 43, 213, 287. For discussion of Nietzsche's conception of persons in these terms see Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 5-9.

⁷Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morality* Preface 6

⁸Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 110-26, Huddleston, 'Nietzsche's Meta-Axiology', Foot, 'Nietzsche: The Revaluation of All Values', Reginster, 'The Psychology of Christian Morality', 701, 726, Katsafanas, *Agency and Foundation of Ethics*, 183-238, and Mitchell, 'Nietzschean Self-Overcoming'.

⁹Poellner, 'Affect, Value and Objectivity', 232 (see also Johnston, 'The Authority of Affect'). This view, or something similar to it, is known as the perceptual theory of the emotions. For a detailed survey of the perceptual theory, along with some of the recent criticisms of it, see Döring and Lutz, 'Beyond Perceptualism'.

appropriate to, or merited by, what are taken to be the objects intrinsic evaluative features, that is its intrinsic nature. Therefore this view is said to explain, in a way that it is claimed the Humean reading cannot, certain affective responses being experienced as readily intelligible to their subjects at the personal level.¹⁰ As will become clear I favour aspects of the latter view, since in at least a certain class of cases it provides a way of arguing that taste for Nietzsche can sometimes enjoy epistemic privilege.¹¹

The structure of this article will be as follows. Section I will examine the textual evidence for an anti-realist reading of Nietzsche on taste. Section II will then provide an account of taste as an 'affective evaluative sensibility', asking whether taste so understood supports an anti-realist reading. I will argue that it does not and that we should resist construing the affects (*Affekte*), which constitute taste for Nietzsche, as no more than Humean subjective preferences. Section III will then consider passages in which Nietzsche makes a connection between taste and epistemic considerations, suggesting that he appears to situate the epistemic privilege of his taste in a more fundamental method of evaluative disclosure, namely pre-reflective affective responses. Finally, Section IV will suggest that we can make sense of how such affective responses could provide us with evaluative knowledge by narrowing the scope of the objects of Nietzsche's taste to other affective-evaluative states, such that the affective responses are meta-affective evaluations. On the basis of this idea I construct a theory of meta-affective responses providing their subjects with access to the intrinsic phenomenal value of other affective-evaluative states, and then go on to show how Nietzsche can be read as applying this theory in a number of passages.

I. The Anti-Realist Reading: Core Textual Evidence

It might seem a relatively well-established aspect of most people's pre-philosophical understanding of taste to think in broadly anti-realist terms. An anti-realist position in this context holds that there are no objective standards that are applicable as to warrant a judgement of taste being correctly said to enjoy epistemic privilege. This seems to be the intuition expressed when taste is qualified by subjectivizing terms, such as just, merely, only, your, their etc. The thought is that if something is a 'matter of taste', then the point has

¹⁰For discussion of the distinction between the personal and sub-personal level see Stich, 'Beliefs and subdoxastic states'.

¹¹See Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 118-120, Poellner, 'Affect, Value and Objectivity', 227-61, 'Aestheticist Ethics', 52-80. Something should also be said about the view of Paul Katsafanas who seems to agree with aspects of Poellner's view about the phenomenology of affective-evaluative experience, but supplements this phenomenology with a further story about Nietzschean drives, on which such affective-evaluations are putatively metaphysically grounded (see Katsafanas, 'Value, Affect, Drive'). This perhaps suggests a certain kind of 'error theory' about the role that intentional objects play in the specification of the evaluative content of affects. As Section IV will make clear, in a certain class of cases that Nietzsche is concerned with it is not of paramount importance to resolve such questions about the metaphysical grounds of affective-evaluative experience.

been reached at which further debate is futile, at least if such debate is aiming at demonstrating epistemic privilege. However, what typically supports this epistemological thesis is a metaphysical claim. It is because the relevant taste-guiding evaluative facts are claimed not to be part of the 'fabric of the world',¹² that we cannot reasonably make a claim to epistemic privilege. According to the anti-realist, there are no suitably objective evaluative facts which a particular taste, and judgements expressing it, could correspond to. I take this to be a fair characterization of what (most) anti-realists about taste are committed to. My question in this section is whether we have compelling textual evidence for thinking that this view, or something approximating to it, is Nietzsche's.

Before considering whether Nietzsche can be interpreted as an anti-realist about taste it is worth bearing in mind the scope of taste for him. It is fair to say that the anti-realist position has seemed more attractive in certain sub-fields of evaluative discourse than in others. For example, the anti-realist picture has often been more widely accepted in aesthetics, than ethics.¹³ Yet, part of the distinctiveness of Nietzsche's use of the term taste is that it is not, or at least not obviously, local in this sense, but rather is applied to the evaluative domain in general. More specifically, the objects of taste, whether of Nietzsche's own or those he is criticizing, characteristically have a broad ethical significance, insofar as more often than not they concern people's features, dispositions, and evaluative attitudes.¹⁴ So, if it is the case that Nietzsche is an anti-realist about taste then he is likely an anti-realist about most evaluative matters that concern him, including ethics (broadly construed), and that would be a significant conclusion. It would strongly motivate Leiter's interpretation in the sense that we could move from the claim that Nietzsche 'tends to equate evaluative questions with matters of taste', to the conclusion that he does not 'in fact, believe his evaluative perspective [his taste, or indeed any other] is privileged along any epistemic dimension'.¹⁵

So what textual evidence is there that Nietzsche is an anti-realist about taste? Two passages from *The Gay Science* seem to fit this model. There he says 'what decides against Christianity now is our taste, not our reasons',¹⁶ and describes a thought about justice as follows; 'I'd rather let myself be robbed than be surrounded by scarecrows – that is my taste. And in any case it is a matter of taste – nothing more'.¹⁷ He also gestures in a similar direction in a letter where he says 'I have a "taste"...but no reasons, no logic, no

¹²Mackie, *Ethics*, 22.

¹³Ibid: 43.

¹⁴The objects of taste for Nietzsche will be specified in more detail in Section IV.

¹⁵Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 119, and Leiter, 'Nietzsche's Metaethics', 279, respectively.

¹⁶Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 132, see also *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 'Retired'

¹⁷Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 184.

imperative, for this taste'.¹⁸ Taking *The Gay Science* 184 first, it is not clear what exactly Nietzsche intends; the aphorism is titled 'Justice', but is undeveloped to the extent of admitting of a number of interpretations. Are we to presume that any evaluative concept of justice is a matter of taste, or could it be that the cryptic idea of preferring being robbed than putting up barriers to being robbed is Nietzsche's idea of justice, and it is this idea which is matter of taste? It is the phrases 'matter of taste' and 'nothing more' which suggest the anti-realist position, however this aphorism is too elusive to motivate interpretative conclusions.¹⁹

The Gay Science 132 and the letter to Peter Gast are stronger evidence for the anti-realist interpretation. Though both are very short, what is important about these passages is the distinction that is made between taste on the one hand and reasons on the other. The letter in particular which talks of 'no reasons, no logic, no imperative' for Nietzsche's taste seems to suggest the absence of any normative reasons which could justify the taste in question from some position external to it, that is reasons which possess a normative ('imperative') force, and are typically thought to acquire that status by reposing on the relevant evaluative facts.²⁰ However, to read these passages as confirmation that Nietzsche was an anti-realist about taste requires that we accept a further premise which is not obviously present in either, namely that epistemic privilege is something that could only be enjoyed by that which concerns reasons, where the relevant Humean distinction is between our cognitive faculties (i.e., those which involve belief, inference, reflection and deliberative reasoning) and taste understood as something akin to what 18th century thinkers (like Hume) called passion or sentiment.

So framed in Humean terms, we can reach the anti-realist conclusion as follows. We might say that Nietzsche's term taste, or at least what constitutes taste for him (more on this in Section II), is equivalent to

¹⁸Nietzsche, Letter to Heinrich Koselitz (Peter Gast), 19 November 1886 (*Kritische Gesamtausgabe: Briefwechsel* III.2, p. 284), see also *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 'On the Spirit of Gravity', 2. We could consider more of those passages in which Nietzsche describes his evaluative perspective in first-personal terms in support of the anti-realist reading (see *Beyond Good and Evil* 200, *On the Genealogy of Morality* III:22). However, since what is at issue is whether or not Nietzsche thinks particular tastes can enjoy epistemic privilege, citing such passages would beg the question in favour of a central anti-realist assumption, namely that in virtue of being personally indexed a taste cannot enjoy epistemic privilege. Note that *The Gay Science* 184 and *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, 'On the Spirit of Gravity' 2, are different because of the qualification to the taste in question, i.e., 'nothing more' and 'not good, not bad'.

¹⁹The term 'matter of taste' is only used twice in the Nietzsche corpus (both published and unpublished), first in *The Gay Science* 184 and second in *The Gay Science* 13, where he claims that how to realize feelings of power is a 'matter of taste'.

²⁰Normative reasons should be distinguished from motivating reasons, where the latter are concerned merely with considerations in light of which the agent chose to perform a certain action, or make a judgement, and so a reason in light of which the action or judgement is rationally intelligible (e.g., "I ϕ 'd because Q"). In contrast, the subject's possession of normative reasons (on this definition) can give certain actions and judgements the quality of being 'good' or 'right', and so speak in favour of them in a stronger sense (see Dancy, *Practical Reality*, 1-20, see also Scanlon, *What We Owe Each Other*, 15, for the notion of a reason as a consideration that counts in favour of something).

Hume's sentiments. And it is our sentiments which give us the most basic ends of our evaluative preferences, reason only having an instrumental role to play in evaluative matters. Yet it is reason, for Hume, as a representational mental state with mind-to-world direction of fit, whose contents are truth assessable, and therefore in a position to (potentially) enjoy epistemic privilege, a privilege that cannot be enjoyed by the non-representational inner sentiments.²¹ This line of thought is expressed in Hume's challenge to explain the offense to reason in preferring 'the destruction of the whole world to the scratching of my finger'.²² His conclusion is that we cannot, and so at the fundamental level of evaluative preference (i.e., sentiment or feeling), that is where reason is not involved, it makes no sense to talk about epistemic privilege.

Could something like the above be Nietzsche's view and therefore, with some added Humean philosophical psychology, support the anti-realist reading? This is a promising route for the anti-realist interpretation to take, since if Nietzsche's philosophical psychology turns out to be Humean in the relevant respects, then that interpretive conclusion should follow.²³ To assess this we need to know more about what exactly constitutes taste for Nietzsche.

II. Taste as AES and Anti-Realism

Up to this point it has not been specified clearly enough what taste is for Nietzsche at the fundamental level, and I have just been taking taste to be broadly synonymous with an evaluative perspective. What is now required is a more precise understanding of the theoretical constituents of taste. Poellner claims that we should interpret taste for Nietzsche as a 'pattern of conscious affectivity',²⁴ where taste is constituted by affects (*Affekte*), or more precisely by certain recurrent affective-evaluations which form what we can call a general sensibility. Without yet committing to the precise nature of what an affect is for Nietzsche, we can put this view as follows:

Taste as AES (affective-evaluative sensibility): someone with taste T will typically evaluate objects of type O as either positive or negative on the basis of evaluative features which are disclosed to the

²¹Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 415. See also Searle, *Intentionality*, on directions of fit.

²²Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, 416

²³The core passages canvassed for the anti-realist reading in this section are too short and undeveloped to provide decisive evidence for that interpretation. That is not to dismiss them, since when I provide an alternative interpretation in Section III I will explain how they can be read differently.

²⁴Poellner, 'Affect, Value and Objectivity', 231.

subject through recurrent conscious experiences of affect A when in the presence of objects of type O.²⁵

An AES would therefore not merely be a pattern of conscious feeling but a pattern, or tendency, of evaluation on the basis of certain recurrent consciously experienced feelings.

Reflecting on this view we can see that it captures at least two central features of our pre-philosophical conception of taste. (1) Affectivity: it seems a fairly well established part of our everyday conception of taste to think that the psychological states which constitute it are not exclusively cognitive (e.g., beliefs, judgements, etc.) but also involve a felt phenomenology through being affected in various ways (I will explain this important feature in more detail in what follows). (2) Scope of application: it seems plausible that part of what is distinctive about possessing a taste in something, as opposed to making unconnected token evaluations, is a structured pattern of evaluation across a range of tokens of the same type, and doing so in a way that recognizes the evaluatively relevant features of those tokens. For example, a 'good' taste in films is concerned not just with evaluating one film, but with (at least in principle) all actual or possible films with a view to recognizing the evaluatively relevant features. However, it bears repeating that part of the distinctiveness of Nietzsche's understanding of taste is his application of this term to the evaluative domain in general. So whereas we frequently talk about 'taste in X', where X is a type of evaluand (e.g., films, books, music, etc.), taste for Nietzsche, as an AES, has application across a variety of types of evaluands as a general sensibility. We can see this in his description of noble taste as a pattern of evaluation with regard to 'the polis, the agonistic instinct, the value of breeding, the authority of descent'.²⁶

However, what evidence is there that Nietzsche might have thought of taste not just as a general sensibility but understood such sensibilities as constituted by those psychological states he calls affects? In fact such an interpretation is supported by a number of passages. For example, when talking about Wagner's 'corrupted taste' he highlights 'the convulsiveness of his affects, his over-charged sensibility, his taste that craves stronger and stronger spices'.²⁷ Elsewhere Nietzsche claims that 'what group of sensations in a soul will be the first to wake up, start speaking, and making demands is decisive for the

²⁵Talk of objects here should not be taken to beg the question in favour of a realist construal. As will become clear in what follows it makes sense to think of Nietzsche's affects as involving intentional objects (Leiter, 'Review of "Nietzsche, Naturalism and Normativity"', agrees).

²⁶Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* IX:4, see also *Writings from the Late Notebooks* 11[31]. Nietzsche also takes the same approach to German taste as a general sensibility in *Beyond Good and Evil* 244 (see also *Beyond Good and Evil* 240, *The Will to Power* 868).

²⁷Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner* 5. See also *The Case of Wagner* 8, *The Will to Power* 849, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* 2[34].

whole rank order of its values...a person's valuations reveal something about the *structure* of his soul'.²⁸ Given these passages it is plausible to interpret taste in Nietzsche as referring to AES. However, if we are going to assess whether understanding taste in this way counts in favour of an anti-realist interpretation or not we need to know more about the affective states that constitute taste, and their role in evaluation.

The central role of affects or affective experience in Nietzsche's thinking about value is evidenced when he asks 'what is the meaning of the act of evaluation itself...in short where did it originate? Or did not "originate"? – Answer: moral evaluation is an *exegesis*, a way of interpreting ... Who interprets? – Our affects'.²⁹ Elsewhere he also talks about affects as 'the mightiest natural power' and the 'greatest sources of strength'.³⁰ Nevertheless, exactly what significance this term has for Nietzsche requires a philosophical reconstruction. Christopher Janaway provides a starting point, he says '...all affects are at bottom inclinations or aversions of some kind. But their range is extensive...he explicitly uses the term for the following: anger, fear, love, hatred, hope, envy, revenge, lust, jealousy, irascibility, exuberance, calmness...Affects are, at the very least, ways in which we *feel*. Many specific instances are what we would call emotions'.³¹

So, in at least some central cases, Nietzsche's affects are conscious emotions. As kinds of emotions we might think they typically involve (1) A first-personal qualitative character, and (2) An intentional object at which they are directed ('aboutness'). For example, as the subject of anger I will experience a feeling of disapproval along with certain bodily sensations such as muscle tensing and increased heart rate; there is something it feels like to experience anger. However, such affects, understood as emotions, are not states that assail us *ex nihilo*. Rather, often this affective phenomenology is experienced as caused by, as an apparent effect of, the intentional object that it is directed towards. Again in the case of anger there is typically something I am angry about (e.g., the inconsiderate individual who just barged into me).³² That most affects possess these two features (1) a felt phenomenology, and (2) intentional objects that are typically taken to cause that experience, is relatively uncontroversial.³³ We should also add (3) affective experience is typically pre-reflective, since although I can reflect on my affects, reflection is not an essential

²⁸Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 268 (emphasis added). See also *The Gay Science* 302, *Beyond Good and Evil* 187, 224.

²⁹Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* 254.

³⁰Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* 386 and 931 respectively. See also *On the Genealogy of Morality* III:12, *Beyond Good and Evil* 117, 187, 258, 284.

³¹ Janaway, 'Autonomy, Affect and the Self', 52.

³²In certain cases what we reflectively judge to be the actual cause of the emotion and its intentional object can come apart, although this typically does not show up at the personal level.

³³This is accepted in most contemporary philosophy of the emotions (see Deonna and Teroni, *An Introduction to Philosophy of the Emotions*, 1-6).

part of affective experience.³⁴ For example, we do not need to reflect on, or form explicit judgements about, a conscious anxiety that we experience as caused by an aggressive individual to experience it as an episode of fear.³⁵

Yet, we might ask what exactly the connection between such affective experiences and values amounts to, since taste in Nietzsche is being interpreted as affective-evaluative sensibility. It seems that at least part of the thought Nietzsche wants to express in the passages above is that our values in some way depend on these affects, and by dint of this our taste as synonymous with our affective-evaluative perspective. Ordinary language implies that there is a close connection between affects and values insofar as many typical affective responses seem to involve a registering of value or disvalue. For example, admiration involves an appraisal of its object as of value, as admirable, similarly disgust involves an appraisal of its object as of disvalue, as disgusting. Moreover, such affective-evaluative experiences often seem to underwrite corresponding evaluative judgements concerning the intentional objects of those experiences.³⁶ This picture certainly fits with *The Will to Power* 254 where Nietzsche tells us that the ‘meaning of the act of evaluation itself’ is based in our affects and elsewhere when he says that ‘value words are banners raised where a *new bliss* has been found – a *new feeling*’.³⁷ So part of what Nietzsche seems to be suggesting is that both our fundamental acquaintance with values, and perhaps also the reasons on the basis of which we judge objects as having evaluative properties, is through affective-evaluative experiences, i.e., through certain kinds of conscious emotions.³⁸

Now that we have an understanding of what an affect is for Nietzsche, and its connection to evaluation, we can ask whether reading taste as an AES motivates the anti-realist reading of taste or not, and *prima*

³⁴See Marcel and Lambie, ‘Consciousness and the Varieties of Emotional Experience’. Related to this point the discussion in what follows pertains to occurrent affects, that is affects that are consciously experienced by particular persons at particular times, rather than emotional or affective dispositions, long-lasting affective states, or even unconscious or sub-personal affects (see Lyons, *Emotions*, 53-7, for discussion of occurrent emotions).

³⁵The importance of the pre-reflective dimension to affective-evaluations for Nietzsche will be stressed in Section IV.

³⁶For the cognitivist view that emotions should be thought to involve, even if only in part, evaluative judgements see Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought* and Solomon, *The Passions*. There are good philosophical reasons for thinking that in the basic cases emotional experience does itself involve an evaluative judgement. For example, cases of emotional recalcitrance are often thought to tell against judgement theories insofar as they seem to require attributing to the subject of the emotion contradictory propositional contents (for discussion see Tappolet, ‘Emotions, Perceptions, and Emotional Illusions’, 211 and Döring, ‘Why Recalcitrant Emotions are Not Irrational’, 124-26). Rather, it is sometimes argued that in good cases emotions, even though not themselves (involving) evaluative judgements, can provide reasons for evaluative judgements concerning their intentional objects, in an analogous way to how perceptual experiences arguably provide reasons for empirical judgements. For a reconstruction of Nietzsche’s thinking about affects along these lines see Poellner, ‘Affect, Value and Objectivity’, 227-261.

³⁷Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* 714.

³⁸See Johnston, ‘Authority of Affect’, for a similar view in contemporary philosophy.

facie it might seem to. Since, even if affects have a felt phenomenology and intentional objects, we might nonetheless think of them as merely expressing inclinations and aversions. Such that the evaluative content of such affective states is still to be explained in terms of contingently acquired subjective preferences and dispositions (akin to Humean sentiments).³⁹ In this sense evaluative taste would be reducible to a structured pattern of such ‘world-independent’ affective-evaluative preferences, and evaluative perspectives based in taste would be a ‘matter of taste, nothing more’.⁴⁰ So by understanding taste in terms of an AES, and clarifying Nietzsche’s philosophical psychology, we can seemingly reach the anti-realist conclusion that he does not ‘in fact, believe his evaluative perspective [his taste, or indeed any other] is privileged along any epistemic dimension’.⁴¹

However, Nietzsche’s affects are not sufficiently similar to Humean sentiments to motivate moving from the claim that taste is grounded in them to the anti-realist conclusion. For example, in a note Nietzsche complains about ‘the misunderstanding of passion and reason, as if the latter were an independent entity and not rather a system of relations between various passions and desires; and as if every passion did not possess its quantum of reason’.⁴² Elsewhere he criticizes ‘blind indulgence’ of the affects and suggests they be ‘habitually sifted by reason’.⁴³ Yet perhaps the strongest textual evidence against reading Nietzsche’s affects as fundamentally nothing more than subjective Humean preferences is his claim about the kind of objectivity that is potentially provided by them in *On the Genealogy of Morality* III:12. There Nietzsche says we can ‘use the difference in...affective interpretations for knowledge’ and that ‘the *more* affects we are able to put into words about a thing, the *more* eyes, various eyes we are able to use for the same thing, the more complete will be our ‘concept’ of the thing, our ‘objectivity’” (emphases in original). If Nietzsche understood affects as fundamentally nothing more than internal sentiments, having no necessary representational characteristics, then his comments in this passage would be problematically inconsistent with that view.

So, the route through Nietzsche’s philosophical psychology does not count decisively in favour of the anti-realist reading. There is insufficient evidence that Nietzsche thought of affects in the way that he would have needed to if he wanted to move from a distinction between taste and reasons (*The Gay Science* 132) to the claim that the former can never enjoy epistemic privilege. In the following sections I will build on the

³⁹Such a view might be supplemented with a Humean-style projectivist story about certain ‘objectivizing’ aspects of the phenomenology of value (see Mackie, *Ethics*, 42-46, and for criticism McDowell, ‘Values and Secondary Qualities’).

⁴⁰Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 184.

⁴¹Leiter, ‘Nietzsche’s Metaethics’, 279.

⁴²Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* 388, see also *Beyond Good and Evil* 284.

⁴³Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* 928.

above discussion, suggesting that we can think that Nietzsche held that taste is grounded in affective-evaluations and that in certain circumstances there is an epistemic privilege to be enjoyed in virtue of this.

As a final consideration in favour of the anti-realist reading we could turn to questions about the metaphysics of value. At the beginning of Section I it was said that anti-realism about taste typically relies on a metaphysical claim about the non-existence of suitably objective evaluative facts. So, it might be argued that if we can show that Nietzsche is an anti-realist about all evaluative facts then we would have good reason to think he is an anti-realist about taste, and support for the former claim could appeal to his repeated denial of the metaphysical objectivity of value. However, exactly what conclusions to draw from Nietzsche's denial of metaphysical objectivism about value are contentious, and anti-realism does not necessarily follow from what is the most recurrent feature of Nietzsche's sceptical reflections on value, namely his rejection of a Platonic view of value.⁴⁴ Moreover, a significant number of his anti-realist claims are specifically directed at moral value rather than the evaluative domain as a whole.⁴⁵ In this sense there might be a special problem about the objectivity of moral value for Nietzsche. Therefore, as long as we do not think he commits to the claim that moral value exhausts the evaluative domain, and there are no clear textual grounds to think he does, then even if it turns out that Nietzsche is an anti-realist of some kind about moral value then nothing necessarily follows for the evaluative domain in general. In any case these are complex issues that would require a more detailed treatment of Nietzsche's theory of value.⁴⁶ However, a caveat will be introduced in Section IV concerning how we should think of the objects of taste for Nietzsche, which will qualify the importance of resolving issues about Nietzsche's metaphysics of value with regard to questions of taste and epistemic privilege.

III. Textual Evidence for the Epistemic Privilege Reading

In the previous two sections I argued that there are no compelling grounds for reading Nietzsche as an anti-realist about taste, even once we understand taste as referring to an AES (affective-evaluative sensibility). One possible response might be to conclude that Nietzsche does not have a particularly well-developed view about whether taste could enjoy epistemic privilege, and so we could refrain from drawing any particular interpretative conclusion. This seems to be Andrew Huddleston's position, so although he

⁴⁴See Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* Preface, *The Gay Science* 301, *Twilight of the Idols* VIII:19, *Ecce Homo* IV:7.

⁴⁵One passage that is sometimes cited in support of Nietzsche's anti-realism about value is *Twilight of the Idols* VII:1; 'there are absolutely no moral facts'. Yet as Leiter himself notes, this passage does not directly support that interpretation, since it is in fact concerned with undermining certain ideas about agency that are needed for moral judgements to be meaningful (see Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 119, fn.27).

⁴⁶For discussion see Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 126-151, Poellner, 'Affect, Value and Objectivity', Katsafanas, *Agency and the Foundations of Ethics*, Huddleston, 'Nietzsche's Meta-Axiology', Silk, 'Nietzschean Constructivism'.

thinks that the texts do not clearly support an anti-realist reading of taste (or indeed Nietzsche's meta-ethics more broadly), neither does he provide an account of how Nietzsche's taste could enjoy epistemic privilege.⁴⁷ However, there a number of passages in which Nietzsche seems to suggest that particular tastes can enjoy epistemic privilege (the EP reading hereafter). This section will survey these passages and then in the following section provide a theoretical account of taste as an AES that can make such a view philosophically plausible.

There are a number of passages in which Nietzsche refers to his own taste and those he admires as good, noble, refined, and those he does not as bad, corrupted, ignoble.⁴⁸ However, in order to motivate the EP reading it is not enough that Nietzsche predicates taste in this way, since what underwrites such evaluative predication may be something more (or other) than epistemic considerations. An alternative would be to draw on passages like *On the Genealogy of Morality* III:12, in which Nietzsche links affects to knowledge, and run a structurally similar argument to the anti-realist from the previous section to generate the opposite conclusion. Namely that since taste is grounded in affects and Nietzsche (at least sometimes) takes affects to provide knowledge, then *ipso facto* taste as an AES can be evaluated, as affects putatively can be, along epistemic lines. Yet, to be exegetically convincing the route needs to be more direct, such that what is required are passages in which Nietzsche explicitly talks about taste alongside epistemic considerations.⁴⁹

One such passage can be found in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where Nietzsche seems to suggest, contrary to what is implied by the anti-realist reading, that taste can be disputed. He has Zarathustra say, 'you tell me, friends, that taste and tasting are nothing to be disputed? But all life is disputing of taste and tasting! Taste: that is simultaneously weight and scale and weigher, and woe to all that would live without disputing weight and scale and weighers'.⁵⁰ In attempting to read all Nietzsche's references to taste in anti-realist terms Leiter claims that, despite first appearances, Nietzsche is not committed to a view of dispute in matters of taste that might undermine that interpretation. This is due to term dispute (*Steit*) in German signifying a state of disagreement in which different parties try to 'enforce' their view, and so not a dispute

⁴⁷See Huddleston, 'Nietzsche's Meta-Axiology', 329.

⁴⁸See Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 373, *Beyond Good and Evil* 21, 43 186, 283, *Twilight of the Idols* II:5, VII:6, IX:3, *The Case of Wagner* 5.

⁴⁹It might be questioned why *On the Genealogy of Morality* III:13 is not being made more of on my account. In fact although this passage seems to give the lie to Humean readings of Nietzsche's affects (given the link to objectivity and knowledge), it is not clear that he is specifically talking about evaluative knowledge *per se*. Rather it seems more natural to read this passage as concerning Nietzsche's views about the grounds of empirical knowledge in affectivity, indeed the way the passage has typically been read is as motivating the view that reality, and knowledge of it, is in some sense perspectival (see Leiter, 'Perspectivism in Nietzsche's Genealogy of Morals', and Poellner, 'Perspectival Truth')

⁵⁰Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* 'On the Sublime Ones'

along epistemic lines.⁵¹

Yet Leiter's reading of this passage is problematic for a number of reasons. First, it threatens to make it Nietzsche's position that all taste-disputing persons are engaged in sophistical reasoning. Such a view certainly does not seem to be explicit in what is said. Moreover it does not seem to fit the dialectic of the passage, insofar as Zarathustra seems to be responding to those who think that taste is 'nothing to be disputed', and this would presumably be what the sophistical position, at the fundamental level, amounts to. In this sense it would be a fairly esoteric point if what is meant is that there are those who think that it is pointless trying to enforce one's view on another (who exactly would these people be?) and Zarathustra is responding to these people, telling them that in fact we should be concerned to dispute taste in the sense of enforcing our view on others. Second, even if we accept Leiter's reading of dispute as referring to 'trying to "enforce" one's will',⁵² as based on the significance of the term in German, it is not clear why one could not accept what this primarily seems to imply, namely that Nietzsche thinks that resolving disputes over taste will most likely have to make use of non-rational methods of persuasion, and still hold that he thinks that particular tastes can enjoy epistemic privilege. I can consistently hold (a) I am right about valuing O positively, (b) you are wrong about valuing O negatively and (c) that getting you to the right position about the value of O is (for whatever reason) not possible by the traditional means of rational persuasion (i.e., proofs, demonstrations, etc.).⁵³

It is worth remembering that on Leiter's reading Nietzsche's official response to those who disagree in evaluative matters should be to 'turn his back and say, "Oh well – doesn't share my evaluative tastes"'.⁵⁴ Yet if this is the case it is difficult to see how can we make sense of the importance of 'disputing' evaluative taste even if this is read as 'enforcing one's will'. Since presumably to those who already agree with one's evaluative taste such 'enforcing' would likely be surplus to requirements. Yet perhaps Nietzsche's goal,

⁵¹Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 120, fn. 28.

⁵²Ibid.

⁵³This line of thought has echoes of Kant's discussion of judgements of taste in *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, Section 8. Judgements of taste are said by Kant to be aesthetic rather than logical, and although they are said to possess a 'subjectively universal validity', they do not involve the application of a concept to an object, and so 'there cannot be any inference at all to logical universal validity', as there can be with empirical judgements which do involve the application of a concept to an object. Kant goes on to describe something similar to the thought in the text when he says (in accordance with the preceding characterization of judgements of taste) that 'there can also be no rule in accordance with which someone could be compelled to acknowledge something as beautiful. Whether a garment, a house, a flower is beautiful: no one allows himself to be talked into his judgment about that by means of any grounds or fundamental principles. One wants to submit the object to his own eyes, just as if his satisfaction depended on sensation; and yet, if one then calls the object beautiful, one believes oneself to have a universal voice, and lays claim to the consent of everyone...' (Ibid: Section 8)

⁵⁴Leiter, *Nietzsche on Morality*, 124.

according to Leiter's reading, is to get those who he has a hunch share his evaluative taste, but are under the sway of false consciousness in evaluative matters, to come around to his view, and he will do this by 'enforcing his will' on these nascent higher-types. However, Zarathustra says that 'all life' is 'disputing of taste and tasting', not just disputing is worth pursuing with those who happen to share my evaluative tastes but are under the sway of false consciousness about some evaluative matter. So, even if we read this passage as Leiter suggests, it is not clear that anything Nietzsche has Zarathustra say here rules out the possibility of him thinking that a particular taste could enjoy epistemic privilege. However, this passage does not provide decisive evidence in favour of the EP reading either.

A passage that makes epistemic considerations more explicit is *The Antichrist* 59:

What we have won back today with unspeakable self-overcoming, a free view of reality, a cautious hand, the patience and the seriousness for the smallest things, all the integrity of knowledge...and on top of this, a good, a refined sense of tact and taste! Not as some sort of dressage of the brain...but as body, as gesture, as instinct, in a word: as reality... (Nietzsche, *The Antichrist* 59, see also *Writings from the Late Notebooks* 10 [3])

What is important to note here is the equating of 'tact and taste' with 'reality', and that a 'good' taste seems to be connected to a 'free view of reality' and 'the integrity of knowledge'. It is hard to read this passage and not think that epistemic considerations are relevant to the evaluative standing of the 'good' taste being described. In another passage Nietzsche makes similar connections, describing an individual who possesses a 'certainty that his sufferings have given him a greater knowledge than the cleverest and wisest can have', highlighting Epicureanism as one such 'showy courage of taste that accepts suffering without a second thought'.⁵⁵ Nietzsche also describes someone who is 'certainly not a person of higher taste' as 'not made for knowledge, not predestined for it'.⁵⁶

More motivation for the EP reading comes from connecting a number of passages on Goethe. In these passages we find Nietzsche describing a particular affective response that Goethe, as 'the last German with a noble taste', had towards Christianity. We are told he viewed 'the cross', as a *foeda superstitio* (vile or repugnant superstition).⁵⁷ In a note Nietzsche elaborates on this idea:

⁵⁵Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 270.

⁵⁶Ibid: 26, see also *The Gay Science* 3

⁵⁷Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner* Epilogue.

...How one stands on the New Testament is a test of whether one has any classical taste in one's body: anyone who isn't revolted by it, who doesn't honestly and profoundly feel something of a 'vile superstition', something from which the hand is snatched away to avoid dirtying it, does not know what is classical. One must feel the cross as Goethe did (Nietzsche, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* 10 [181], see also *The Antichrist* 19, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* 11 [95], 34 [48]).

What we find in these passages is Nietzsche describing what seems like the correct, and so appropriate, response, insofar as the emotion of revulsion is framed as the 'honest' response to 'the cross', such that whether someone responds in this way is a measure of taste. However, it might seem that we could resist interpreting these passages as favouring the EP reading in the following way.⁵⁸ We might say that what is being tested is whether one possesses classical taste. Such that although classical taste has truth-assessable standards of correctness, i.e. there is a correct response to 'the cross', namely revulsion, for a classical taste, on the basis of which (according to Nietzsche) we can determine 'whether one has any classical taste in one's body', this is compatible with there being no independent epistemic privilege for that response, or indeed that taste. In other words, revulsion to 'the cross' is the correct affective-evaluation for a classical taste, but this fact alone need not commit one to holding that there is a correct affective-evaluation to the cross whatsoever.

However, the normative emphasis of the last sentence, that 'one must feel the cross as Goethe did', might raise doubts about whether Nietzsche could be so uncommitted here. Can we make sense of this 'must', with its normative force, as merely conditional?⁵⁹ Read alongside passages in which Nietzsche describes Goethe as 'a convinced realist',⁶⁰ with aspirations to 'universality in understanding...[possessing] a bold realism, a respect for everything objective',⁶¹ one could with good reason be drawn to think that the 'classical taste' Nietzsche takes Goethe to exemplify enjoys, *inter alia*, some kind of epistemic privilege in its affective response to 'the cross'. In this sense it might be indicative of classical taste that one's affective-evaluation takes this character and at the same time Nietzsche takes that response to be the epistemically privileged one.

With the EP reading in mind we can also provide different interpretations of some of those passages from Section I that seemed to motivate the anti-realist interpretation. We could claim that when Nietzsche

⁵⁸Regardless of the EP reading such passages clearly support interpreting taste as an AES given the connection to affective-evaluations.

⁵⁹See also Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 373 on the 'demands' of 'good taste'.

⁶⁰Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols* VIII:49.

⁶¹Ibid: VIII:50.

says that 'what decides against Christianity now is our taste, not our reasons',⁶² we should not understand him as saying that epistemic considerations are irrelevant in an evaluation of Christianity, but rather that what partly underwrites a negative evaluation is an appeal to a more fundamental level of epistemic reasons for evaluative judgements than those provided by rational demonstrations and proofs (what Nietzsche in *The Gay Science* 39 calls the 'whole intellectual masquerade'), namely those that are disclosed in pre-reflective, affective-evaluative experiences. A similar reading could also be provided of the letter to Peter Gast in which Nietzsche says he has 'no reasons, no logic, no imperative' for his taste', insofar as we read Nietzsche as again rejecting any reasons for his evaluative judgements that are disclosed by means other than his pre-reflective, affective-evaluative experiences.⁶³ So, as Poellner puts it, 'our affective response in these cases is itself experienced as not merely contingently *caused*, but as *merited* by the object's intrinsic character'.⁶⁴ Such that our pre-reflective affective responses are understood to disclose evaluative features, through the evaluative content of those affects given through a felt experience of value, as features of their objects, characterizing their nature and so providing us with a more fundamental level of epistemic reasons for our evaluative judgements.⁶⁵ Understanding how we can make philosophically plausible a claim that evaluative knowledge can be gained in this way will be the topic of the final section of this article.

IV. Understanding Nietzsche's Application of Taste

This final section will build on the characterization of taste as an AES presented in Section II, and the textual evidence presented in Section III for the EP reading, by explaining in more detail how we might understand affective-evaluative responses along epistemic lines. I want to suggest that in trying to make Nietzsche's view plausible we should narrow the scope of what type of objects affective-evaluative responses might be veridical to, and in doing so make recourse to a conception of intrinsic phenomenal value drawn from Poellner's reading of Nietzsche.⁶⁶ Section IV.i will explain the theory, and Section IV.ii will apply it to passages in which Nietzsche seems to be working in these terms.

⁶²Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 132

⁶³See Nietzsche, Letter to Heinrich Koselitz (Peter Gast), 19 November 1886 (KGB III.2, p. 284).

⁶⁴Poellner, 'Affect, Value and Objectivity', 247.

⁶⁵Put in a different idiom, we might frame the view as claiming that emotions can in certain cases justify, in the sense of providing reasons for, corresponding evaluative beliefs about their intentional objects. This view has been recently defended in contemporary philosophy of emotions by Pelsner 'Emotion, Evaluative Perception, and Epistemic Justification', and Cowan 'Epistemic Perceptualism and Neo-Sentimentalist Objections' (for skepticism see Brady, 'Emotions, Perceptions and Reasons').

⁶⁶See Poellner, 'Aestheticist Ethics', 52-80.

IV.i. Meta-affects. Affective responses to other affective-evaluations

I want to start this section with an interpretative puzzle and then suggest one way of resolving, or at least avoiding, it. If taste, for Nietzsche, is to be understood as an affective-evaluative sensibility which has at least the possibility of enjoying a certain kind of epistemic privilege, then we are seemingly committing him to the following standard in terms of the affective-evaluations that make up some such epistemically privileged taste:

Standard of epistemic correctness on affective responses: the object of my affective-evaluative response *really* possesses the evaluative characteristic(s) my affective-evaluation (emotion) represents it as having

Now it seems like there is a metaphysical assumption implicit in such a standard that runs against the grain of much that Nietzsche has to say about value, firstly his denial of the metaphysical objectivity of value.⁶⁷ Since what could the evaluative facts that our affective responses supposedly pick out be, other than some metaphysically real, suitably mind-independent, value property (perhaps akin to Platonic or Moorean non-natural properties)?⁶⁸ Therefore, it could be argued that by reading taste in Nietzsche as an AES, and claiming that certain tastes so understood might enjoy epistemic privilege, we end up committing him to some kind of metaphysical realism about values which is exegetically implausible. Secondly, and relatedly, such a standard might seem to conflict with his claims about the creation of value. For example, Nietzsche claims that it is the task of his future philosopher to '*create values*'.⁶⁹ If the volitionist character of such passages are taken at face value, as if new values come into existence *ex nihilo* either on the basis of voluntary acts of will (so called 'radical choice') or through the bald assertion of *de facto* subjective preferences, then is doubtful whether such an idea is coherent with what is typically thought to be required to recognize something as a value that is binding on one, namely some minimal form of objective

⁶⁷See Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* 301, *Beyond Good and Evil* Preface, *Twilight of the Idols* VIII:19.

⁶⁸See Mackie, *Ethics*, 38. In the contemporary context there are numerous realist meta-ethical views which might seem more attractive than Platonism or the positing of Moorean non-natural properties. For example, there are various stripes of moral naturalism which claim that moral properties (e.g., 'goodness' or 'rightness') are either reducible to or identical with natural properties (see Darwall, *Impartial Reason*, and Railton, *Facts, Values and Norms*), and alternatively non-reductive 'Cornell realist' views which claim that moral properties are themselves natural properties (see Sturgeon, 'Ethical Intuitionism and Ethical Naturalism'). There are also more sophisticated versions of moral non-naturalism than those associated with Plato and Moore (see Shafer-Landau, *Moral Realism: A Defence*).

⁶⁹Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 211. See also *Beyond Good and Evil* 260, *On the Genealogy of Morality* I:2, II:25.

constraint.⁷⁰ On the other hand one might be tempted to read at least some of Nietzsche's talk of 'creating values', especially when framed less in the first person (as in for example *The Gay Science* 301) as ostensibly making some kind of meta-ethical claim. Yet, however precisely one cashes out Nietzsche's talk of 'creating values' it should be clear that we are safe to rule out metaphysical realism as a live option. And so again the 'Standard of epistemic correctness on affective responses' might seem to run against the grain of Nietzsche's philosophy of value.

However, what the right metaphysics of value to attribute to Nietzsche is not my concern here, since in at least one type of case that he is concerned with we can sidestep the above worries and defend the view that affective responses can provide us with (defeasible) evaluative knowledge without committing to metaphysical realism about value, or indeed any substantive meta-ethics.

It has been claimed that Nietzsche sometimes thinks of our affective responses (our conscious emotions) as at least potentially involving veridical evaluative content when their intentional objects are *other* affective-evaluative states, that is when they are affective responses to either one's own first-order affective-evaluative states or those of another person, as what I will call meta-affects.⁷¹ The central claim of this view is that our meta-affective responses in such cases, what we can characterize as the attractiveness or unattractiveness we experience when re-presenting those first-order states to ourselves, can provide us with the 'intrinsic phenomenal (dis)value of that state'.⁷² How though could such a meta-affective response pick out an evaluative fact, and so justify a claim to evaluative knowledge, without committing to a stronger metaphysical realism about value?

The distinctiveness of this view lies in the claim about what counts as the (apparent) evaluative fact in such cases. The suggestion is that the only fact that can plausibly be appealed to as constituting evaluative knowledge about a conscious-affective response just is (necessarily) its first-personal, experienced attractiveness or unattractiveness as accurately re-presented to a conscious subject. This follows from an extension to meta-affective responses of the principle (or phenomenological datum) that, in

⁷⁰See Taylor, 'Responsibility for Self', for development of this idea. In fact Nietzsche himself highlights the importance of some form of constraint in 'creative' evaluative activities in *Beyond Good and Evil* 213 and *The Will to Power* 972.

⁷¹Poellner, 'Affect, Value and Objectivity', 247 and Poellner, 'Aestheticist Ethics', 52-80. Hereafter in the text I will refer to 'affective responses to other affective-evaluative states' as meta-affects or meta-affective responses. For discussion of 'meta-emotions' in similar terms see Jäger and Bartsch, 'Meta-Emotions'. In fact Jäger and Bartsch make a number of poorly motivated restrictions on meta-emotions, including that (a) they are necessarily intra-personal, so a meta-emotion cannot be an emotional response to someone else's emotion, and (b) that meta-emotions are generally non-veridical, on the basis of the claim that 'the emotional objects of a meta-emotion need not exist' (Ibid: 186), a claim which of course extends to all intentional objects (including first-order emotions) viz. the intentional inexistence thesis. Mendonca, 'Emotions about Emotions', provides a corrective to some of this.

⁷²Poellner, 'Affect, Value and Objectivity', 247.

the negative case, 'it is a necessary condition for the direct givenness of something as a disvalue that it should be presented in a negative affective mode'.⁷³ Granting this principle, and its positive corollary, the idea is that if we can accurately re-present a first-order affective-evaluative state to ourselves then the meta-affective response we experience in doing so, given in terms of a valenced affective experience, provides us with non-inferential phenomenological evaluative knowledge about that state, i.e., an epistemically direct conscious re-presentation of the intrinsic attractiveness or unattractiveness of being in it.⁷⁴ These are a series of complex points so an example will be helpful to clarify the view.

Consider the state of mind known as petty egoism that has a characteristic tendency to distort the evaluative features of its objects for self-serving reasons. Imagine a situation in which the petty egoist becomes angry in the presence of an individual who appears to represent a challenge to their ego, for example, when confronted with someone who has a more extensive knowledge than them on a particular matter. In such a situation the petty egoist will typically provide a self-justification of their anger, perhaps claiming that the affronting individual is defective in some way, e.g., posing as knowing something when they do not. So we might say that petty egoism, as an AES (an 'affective evaluative sensibility'), involves the characteristic emotion of anger when there is an affront to their ego, and that this often leads to a misrepresentation of the evaluative features of the relevant intentional objects.

Plugging this example into the view suggested above we get the following. If the petty egoist (or indeed ourselves) were to accurately and transparently (that is without self-deception) re-present that petty egoism to themselves, that is re-present the intentional content of that state in terms of its characteristic *feelings towards* (so both the object it is directed towards and the original affective-evaluation of that intentional-object),⁷⁵ then they would, by way of their meta-affective response, experience the unattractiveness of being affected by a distorting jealousy, and therefore experience its intrinsic phenomenal disvalue. The petty egoist would, as now the subject of this meta-affective response to the accurately re-presented petty egoism, be repulsed by it in some way. And we could say that repulsion of some sort (experienced

⁷³Poellner, 'Aestheticist Ethics', 70.

⁷⁴Ibid. Poellner also adds to his characterization of intrinsic phenomenal value not just adequate representation of the intentional content of the other affective-evaluative state, but also that the state must be 'considered by itself' (Ibid: 68-69). The condition of adequate representation will be considered in the text below. However, the second condition of being 'considered by itself' is intended to signify that what we are interested in, in such cases, is the value of the state itself, rather than what it is instrumentally good for. In other words we are interested in the value of the state as an end in itself rather than a means to some further consequence or effect (keeping in mind the caveat that the instrumental effects or consequences of that state do not, somehow, 'happen to figure in the intentional content of that [first-order] state or action itself' (Ibid: 69). For further discussion of the concept of intrinsic value as involving intentional content and appropriate attitudes see Chisholm, 'Defining Intrinsic Value'.

⁷⁵For the idea of emotions and affective phenomena in general as 'feelings towards' see Goldie, *The Emotions*.

unattractiveness) is the appropriate meta-affective response, providing non-inferential, that is directly experienced, knowledge of a phenomenological evaluative fact about this kind of petty egoism. As Poellner puts the point more generally, the first order affective-evaluative state, 'would [necessarily] be presented in this way to their subjects if they were recognized by them for what they are', that is if they were re-present the first-order state transparently.⁷⁶ Note, that it might be this putative phenomenological evaluative fact about a state of mind like petty egoism that leads people to (a) take steps to try to overcome emotions which involve motivated evaluative distortion, in other words they do not want to be in them, and (b) avoid accurately re-presenting such aspects of their emotional lives to themselves, perhaps by engaging in self-deception or outright denial that one is the bearer of such a state of mind, e.g., "I'm not an egoistical person".⁷⁷

However, this example highlights the complexity of aiming for evaluative knowledge by way of meta-affective responses. What is perhaps most difficult, but required if the meta-affective response, and its own affective-evaluative content, are aiming to be veridical, is an accurate re-presentation of the intentional content of the first-order affective-evaluative state in question. As stated, this would have to involve both (a) the intentional object of that state and (b) the original affective-evaluation of that intentional object. In less technical terms, we would have to be able to affectively acquaint ourselves with the *feelings towards* of a distinct emotional episode or state of ourselves, or that of another subject. I highlight this notion of Peter Goldie's here just to stress that we should not lose sight of the importance of the idea that it is affective feeling, as a *feeling towards*, which is both characteristic of the first-order affective-evaluative state and the second-order meta-affective response to it. It is the affective component of such states that is the representational vehicle for the evaluative intentional content at both levels. It is worth noting that understanding the intentional content of affective experiences (and meta-affects) in this way involves resisting an account of emotions which wants to make a sharp distinction between phenomenal character understood narrowly as akin to non-intentional qualia ('raw feelings') on the one hand, and the intentional or representational content of such states on the other.⁷⁸

Yet, there might be a further complication in cases where the first-order affective-evaluative state is not one's own but someone else's, since this seems to imply that what would be required for such meta-affective re-presentation is direct access to the (affective) mental life of a subject other than oneself.

⁷⁶Poellner, 'Aestheticist Ethics', 70.

⁷⁷A similar story could be told about jealousy and envy, and how we might meta-affectively respond to those affective-evaluative states of mind as characteristic of ourselves or other persons.

⁷⁸Such a sharp distinction is found in the philosophy of mind in Block, 'On a confusion about a function of consciousness' (for criticism see Crane, 'Intentionality as the Mark of the Mental').

However, setting aside more global solipsistic or skeptical worries about knowledge of other minds, and given that it is plausible to think that we are often able, and with some degree of success, to non-inferentially 'see' the emotions of others, say on the basis of a complex perception of their expressive behavior and verbal reports (e.g., "I can see that Mary is angry at Bill"), then at least in principle the theory works just as well when applied to the first-order affective evaluative states of other persons.⁷⁹ Clearly, another layer of complexity will be added when we are dealing with meta-affective responses to emotions that were experienced in the distant past, and so dependent on fallible memory capacities, or in cases where we have no direct experiential acquaintance with that first-order state (e.g., someone tells us about an individual's affective-evaluative states that we have never met). For considerations of space I refrain from developing these more complex applications of the theory.

So, given the conditions on the theory we might think there is significant room for secondary misrepresentation on the part of the assessor, in terms of getting relevant features of that first-order affective-evaluative state plainly wrong (plainly in the sense which presumes that no self-deception is taking place on the part of the assessor). Yet if this is the case we can also say that there is the possibility of satisfying the conditions and getting that content more or less right, and so, with varying degrees of accuracy, successfully re-presenting another affective-evaluative state to oneself through such meta-affects, and in doing so affectively acquainting oneself with an intrinsic phenomenological evaluative fact about it. In such cases I think it is plausible to say that we have good, if defeasible, reasons for believing ourselves to be in possession of phenomenological evaluative knowledge.

Connecting this theory back to questions of taste, the view being offered here is that a taste which (potentially) enjoys epistemic privilege could be said to do so by aiming for phenomenological evaluative facts by way of accurate meta-affects in the way framed above. Such that the affective-evaluations which constitute it could make a claim to possess (defeasible) evaluative knowledge about a range of relevantly

⁷⁹A different worry, and one that connects to exegetical concerns about Nietzsche, is whether the theory presupposes some kind of 'introspective transparency' view, where the 'inner' contents of experience are directly accessible to introspective reflection, in contrast to what Mattia Riccardi calls the 'inner opacity' view, and defends as Nietzsche's position (see Riccardi, 'Inner Opacity: Nietzsche on Introspection and Agency'). If the theory presupposed that the individual registering the meta-affective response was engaged in the reflective exercise of an introspective capacity then we would have good motivation for thinking it unlikely to be Nietzsche's view, given his skepticism (as Riccardi rightly draws attention to) about our capacity for gaining self-knowledge in this way. However, note that the meta-affective response is registered *pre-reflectively*, as a first-personal occurrent experiential state, rather than one which involves the kind of 'mirroring' Nietzsche seems to be objecting to, for example, in *The Gay Science* 354. Put simply, the theory does not presuppose the exercise of reflective capacities, introspective or otherwise, indeed as will become clear in Section IV.ii this feature is in fact in tune with Nietzsche's thoughts about this way of gaining a specific kind of evaluative knowledge.

affective 'mindful' evaluands. However, note that the view being put forward here is of limited scope, and as such the epistemic privilege that a particular taste might enjoy attends only to this type of evaluand. I am not claiming that affective responses to evaluative features of intentional objects can make a claim to veridicality whatsoever.⁸⁰

IV.ii. Applying the theory in Nietzsche texts

So, what evidence is there that something like the above understanding of taste is the one that Nietzsche is working with? Does he really think of taste in these terms, as potentially enjoying epistemic privilege in those cases where the object of one's taste is another mindful object, i.e., another affective-evaluative state (we might say another taste, if that object is an AES)? In fact we will see below that this way of evaluating, in which meta-affective responses are taken to provide a kind of evaluative knowledge about other affective-evaluative states, can be found in Nietzsche's texts.

We can see him working with this mode of affective-evaluation, along with its complex method, in *Beyond Good and Evil* 263:

There is an *instinct for rank*, that, more than anything else, is itself the sign of *high* rank; there is a *pleasure* in nuances of respect that indicates a noble origin and noble habits. The subtlety, quality, and stature of a soul is put dangerously to the test when something of the first rank passes by...Anyone whose task and exercise is the investigation of souls will use this very art, in a variety of forms, to establish the ultimate value of a soul, the unalterable, inborn order of rank it belongs to: this sort of investigator will test out the soul's instinct. (Nietzsche *Beyond Good and Evil* 263 [emphases in original], see also *Beyond Good and Evil* 260, 265, 163)

I will argue that once fully explicated this passage, along with parts of it I have not yet quoted for simplicities sake, exemplifies the theory described in Section IV.i.

To begin, we can understand the first sentence as a description of the method of evaluation Nietzsche is valorizing. To make it clearer we can re-phrase it as follows, (*Beyond Good and Evil* 263 amended):

⁸⁰The view can also remain agnostic about the controversial issue of whether emotional responses to art-works like paintings or pieces of music can be correct or incorrect in anything like this way. However, it is worth noting that if certain aesthetic objects were created with the intention of conveying a certain kind of emotion, in terms of an affective-evaluative state, like, for example, the Edward Munch painting *Despair*, then the theory might, with some relevant amendments, potentially be applicable. See the discussion of Nietzsche's response to Bizet and Wagner's music in the discussion in Section IV.ii for some gestures in this direction.

'there is an affective attunement to intrinsic phenomenological value ('instinct for rank') that is itself the sign of an individual being of high rank'. Or in other words there is what Nietzsche takes to be a preferential way of evaluating, that of aiming for phenomenological evaluative knowledge through meta-affective responses, 'through pleasure [meta-affect] in nuances of respect [first-order affect]', which when we see it at work we know we are dealing with someone who possesses 'noble origin and noble habits', i.e., a noble, and potentially epistemically privileged, taste.⁸¹ The end of the passage in fact draws this connection to taste explicitly, talking of a 'nobility of taste and tactfulness'.

What follows in the passage is a description of an individual whose 'soul's instinct' is tested to see if he displays such attunement to phenomenological value, by seeing if he is aiming for accuracy in his pre-reflective ('before the shudders of authority are there to protect it from intrusive clutches and crudeness'),⁸² affective-response when confronted with an object of high value, 'when something of the first rank passes by'.⁸³ However, It might be objected that I am making an interpretative assumption in claiming that *Beyond Good and Evil* 263 concerns affective attunement to the specifically phenomenological value of another affective-evaluative state. In fact the above reference to 'pleasure' in 'nuances of respect' seems to gesture in this direction, and a number of other features of this passage suggest that this is what Nietzsche has in mind, since he specifically talks about what the 'soul *feels*' in response to what, as we shall see in what follows, is a first-order affective-evaluative state.

So, up to this point we do not quite have the account described in Section IV.i, that of a meta-affective response to a first-order state of mind. In order to see that this is the method Nietzsche is describing we need to specify what this 'something of the first rank' is that 'passes by' our individual whose 'instinct for rank' is being tested. And Nietzsche tells us that it is 'something that goes on its way like a living touchstone, undiscovered, unmarked, and experimenting, perhaps voluntarily covered and disguised'.⁸⁴ I think we should take this to mean that the 'living' (i.e., mindful) something is the 'noble soul', that is the character Nietzsche describes in similar terms as having 'a fundamental certainty...about itself, something that cannot be looked for, cannot be found, and perhaps cannot be lost either. *The noble soul has*

⁸¹See also Nietzsche, *The Will to Power* 943.

⁸²Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 263

⁸³Ibid. It might be questioned what work the appeal to the pre-reflective level is doing here. Remember that in Section II Nietzsche's affects were claimed, as kinds of conscious emotions, to be typically experienced at the pre-reflective level. We can take the pre-reflective condition to signify that the kind of evaluative knowledge being aimed for is non-inferential knowledge by acquaintance, in contrast to evaluative knowledge supposedly gained through exercise of reflective faculties (e.g., demonstrations, proofs, arguments etc., see also the discussion in the text below). A separate project would be required to examine in detail what are, by Nietzsche's lights, the potential pitfalls and distortions of reflective thinking, specifically about value.

⁸⁴Ibid.

reverence for itself.⁸⁵ So the first-order state of mind that our individual who is being tested in *Beyond Good and Evil* 263 is confronted with is the affective-evaluative state of self-reverence, exemplified by the noble soul, who 'passes by' as a 'living touchstone' for this state of mind.⁸⁶

Now that the various pieces are in place we are ready to see how our individual fares, that is whether he exemplifies an 'instinct for rank', in terms of aiming for knowledge about the intrinsic phenomenal value of noble self-reverence by way of an accurate meta-affective response. In fact the individual is shown to pass the test with flying colours insofar as his meta-affective has precisely this character. His response is described by Nietzsche as involving 'an involuntarily hush, a hesitation of the eye and a quieting of every gesture, all of which indicate that the soul [our individual being tested] *feels* the presence of something deserving the highest honours'.⁸⁷ In other words, our individual passes Nietzsche's test, he displays the requisite ability (attunement to intrinsic phenomenological value through meta-affective responses), shown through his meta-affect of *pleasure* which 'the soul [he] *feels*' to an accurately re-presented affective-evaluative state, in this case noble self-reverence. What our individual is shown to gain through this representation of noble self-reverence is affective acquaintance with the positive value of this state of mind, that is an attunement to its intrinsic phenomenal value, and so a directly intuited evaluative fact about *what it feels like* to be affected by those 'proud states of soul that are perceived as distinctive',⁸⁸ or in other words their experienced attractiveness and so necessarily positive phenomenal value, as accurately and self-transparently re-presented to him (and we might add other possible subjectivities).

We also find this distinctive method of evaluation in other passages from *Beyond Good and Evil*. Describing his 'Future Philosopher', Nietzsche asks 'are they new friends of "truth", these upcoming philosophers?' and replies 'probably since all philosophers have so far loved their truths'.⁸⁹ However, Nietzsche, albeit in a different idiom, reminds us that what he primarily has in mind in terms of the 'truths' of his Future Philosophers, are epistemic reasons for evaluative judgements as given through their affective-evaluative sensibility, that is through their taste; 'they will not be dogmatists. It would offend their pride, as well as their taste, if their truth were a truth for everyone...' 'My judgement is my judgement: other people

⁸⁵Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 287. Note also that in the case of self-reverence, the intentional object of the noble's first-order affective-evaluation is himself.

⁸⁶What might be thought striking about Nietzsche's description in *Beyond Good and Evil* 263 is the quasi-perceptual language that is used; something of the 'first rank *passes by*', and 'souls *feels* the *presence*' (1st and 3rd emphases are mine). This might suggest that Nietzsche takes the paradigm case of the application of the meta-affective response theory to be those situations in which an assessor experiences a meta-affect to the emotion, or affective-evaluative state of mind, of another individual who is perceptually present to the assessor.

⁸⁷Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 263.

⁸⁸Ibid: 260.

⁸⁹Ibid: 43.

don't have an obvious right to it too" – perhaps this is what such a philosopher of the future will say'.⁹⁰ Why, would others not have an 'obvious' right to the value judgements of such Future Philosophers? A plausible answer is found in *Beyond Good and Evil* 268, where Nietzsche tells us that 'using the same words is not enough to get people to understand each other: they have to use the same words for the same species of inner experiences too'. In this sense we might say that insofar as Nietzsche's Future Philosopher does away with the 'bad taste of wanting to be in agreement with the majority',⁹¹ then what is (at least in part) exemplary about this figure is that he rejects as unjustified any evaluative judgement concerning 'matters of the spirit',⁹² i.e., affective-evaluative states, which he is not acquainted with by means of his taste, as guided by his pre-reflective meta-affective responses.⁹³ In other words, his positive aim in evaluative matters is meta-affective attunement to phenomenological value, as revealed through potentially veridical re-presentations of that which concern 'matters of the spirit'.⁹⁴ As such it makes sense for Nietzsche to describe the Future Philosopher as holding onto the 'certainty of value standards',⁹⁵ and rejecting as phenomenologically unverified any conception of the good, that is any standard of value, as determined by some other method, as, for example a standard of value determined by some appeal to consensus agreement; 'how could there ever be a "common good"!'.⁹⁶

We might also look to passages from *The Case of Wagner* as exemplifying the method from IV.1. There we find descriptions of meta-affective responses to quasi-mental and affective qualities of both Wagner's and Bizet's music. Regarding Bizet Nietzsche writes that the music 'approaches lightly, supplely, politely. It is amiable, it does not sweat...a different sensuality is speaking here, a different sensibility' and claims that

⁹⁰Ibid.

⁹¹Ibid.

⁹²Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 210.

⁹³Ibid. Nietzsche seems to voice a similar thought when he later writes that 'Everything good makes me fertile. I do not know any other gratitude, and I do not have any other *proof* for what is good' (*The Case of Wagner* 1). Robert Musil expresses a similar view (see Musil, *The Man Without Qualities*, Volume III, 122). Perhaps there is also a way in which aspects of Nietzsche's description of the way the noble-type 'creates values' could be read along these lines, so when he says that 'the noble type of person feels that *he* determines value, he does not need anyone's approval' (*Beyond Good and Evil* 260, emphasis in original), we might think that the theory described above captures why this might be the case. In any case the connection is a complex one which for reasons of space I merely gesture towards here.

⁹⁴This is a kind of aiming for accuracy that Nietzsche thinks religious and moral interpretations of our 'inner experience' systematically malign through various kinds of misrepresentation and self-deception (see *The Antichrist* 9, 26, *Writings from the Late Notebooks* 34 [48]).

⁹⁵Nietzsche, *Beyond Good and Evil* 210.

⁹⁶Ibid: 43. See also *Beyond Good and Evil* 219 and *Antichrist* 11. Nietzsche might be thought to level a similar charge against theories of value that are, like Kantianism, premised on suspending affectivity (or in Kantian language 'inclinations'; see Kant, *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*, and see *Beyond Good and Evil* 5, 187, *Antichrist* 11 for Nietzsche's criticisms along these lines).

he is listening to that which 'causes' the music, 'it seems to me that I experience its origin – I *tremble* in the face of dangers that accompany some risk'.⁹⁷ We could interpret this as Nietzsche registering a meta-affect, which is aiming at accurately re-presenting those expressive affective states that went into creating the music, and so attempting to (re)acquaint himself with their intrinsic phenomenal value. Also of note in this work are the number of times Nietzsche uses epistemic terms in relation to a negative evaluation of Wagner's 'soul' and his music.⁹⁸ We are told that under the influence of Wagner 'the musician is now becoming an actor, his art is developing more and more into a talent for *lying*,⁹⁹ that 'Wagner's music is never true. – But *it is taken to be true...*',¹⁰⁰ that his 'magic-maiden tones pander to every type of cowardice in the modern soul! – There was never such a *deadly hatred* of knowledge',¹⁰¹ and that in contrast to Bizet, Wagner's music involves 'counterfeit' and the '*lie* of the grand style'.¹⁰² We also seem to get Nietzsche registering a meta-affective response to the expressive or affective qualities of Wagner's music, calling it 'brutal', 'artificial' and 'innocent', going on to say that he finds Wagnerian timbre 'harmful...I break out in a sullen sweat. *My good weather is other*'.¹⁰³ When coupled with his claims that Wagner 'ruined taste', and exemplifies a 'corrupted taste',¹⁰⁴ all of this seems to point in the direction of the EP reading of taste and its articulation in the theory of meta-affective responses set out in IV.1.

In sum, this final section has showed one way in which we might theorize the textual evidence from Section 3, where it was said that Nietzsche thinks that taste can potentially enjoy epistemic privilege. According to my reading, taste as an AES can be said to do so in those cases in which the objects of one's taste are other affective-evaluative states. Such epistemic privilege is to be thought of in terms of accurately representing those first-order states to oneself and experiencing meta-affective responses. And it is this response which provides evaluative knowledge of *what it like* to be in that state, conveying to the assessor its intrinsic phenomenal value. Not only do we see this mode of evaluation at work in *Beyond Good and Evil* 263, but as *Beyond Good and Evil* 43 and other passages shows, understanding taste in this way, as guided by meta-affective responses, is one way of making sense of Nietzsche's equating evaluative judgements to matters of taste, without sacrificing the idea that certain tastes might sometimes

⁹⁷Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner* 1 (emphasis mine).

⁹⁸Ibid: Preface.

⁹⁹Ibid: 7.

¹⁰⁰Ibid: 8.

¹⁰¹Ibid: Postscript

¹⁰²Ibid: 1. See also Poellner, 'Affect, Value and Objectivity', 246 who frames Nietzsche's (and the noble's) emotional response to *ressentiment* (*On the Genealogy of Morality* I:10), and more generally the proponents of 'slave morality', in these terms.

¹⁰³Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner* 1 (emphasis in original).

¹⁰⁴Nietzsche, *The Case of Wagner* Preface.

enjoy epistemic privilege over their rivals. They would be, for him, better justified in their evaluative judgements of the relevantly mindful evaluands, and so their evaluative perspective would be more likely to be true, insofar as they were based on an accurate, although defeasible and so in principle revisable, representation of the intrinsic phenomenal value of those relevantly mindful evaluands through meta-affective responses.

Concluding Remarks

In this article I have argued that we should resist anti-realist interpretations of Nietzsche's understanding of taste. There is neither compelling textual evidence to suggest that Nietzsche thought of taste in these terms, nor when we understand taste as an AES (affective evaluative sensibility), and account for those affects that constitute taste so understood, does the anti-realist conclusion follow. Rather we can understand taste in Nietzsche as referring to what he takes to be a more fundamental level of disclosure of evaluative knowledge, namely pre-reflective meta-affective responses. Such that in a certain class of cases, namely when the objects of those responses are other affective-evaluative states, such responses can provide us with phenomenological evaluative knowledge, and so potentially enjoy, and so make a claim to, epistemic privilege over their rivals.

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