Progymnasma 4: What is truth?

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In [1], Friedrich Nietzsche writes, *"Where words are concerned, what matters is never truth, never the full and adequate expression; otherwise there would not be so many languages."* When we consider his philosophical ideas from a broader viewpoint, we understand that for him, **what was real was what was apparent**, and this led to his numerous declarations on truth being a pretence of words formed by humans to survive collectively. In Strong's words [2], language, for Nietzsche, "serves a double function": it is both "the means by which we construct the world," and "the tools by which [we] must deal with the world."

For instance, some readers might buy books of their favourite authors without even reading the excerpt, captivated by their previous experience of the author's way with words or just by the author's branding of themselves that interests the reader, which highlights a crucial aspect of modern existence: stories and symbolisms. The way product managers go about revolving the world's attention to their product through their way of talking and leveraging people's reviews of their products, that is what constructs the "truth" of their product. So, Nietzsche's philosophy does appear to be true, since in these cases, groups of people agree on a truth (about a product) and it becomes a truth for the whole world (because if they [did] own that product, they would want to believe some sort of story about it to flatter themselves).

Wedding customs across various regions, such as the use of red attire and circumambulation around fire in Indian ceremonies, contrasted with the white dresses and exchange of vows with a kiss in American rituals, again contributes to Nietzsche's point of language being a necessary 'social construct', that is different for every country and every culture.

However, although he emphasizes that truth in the modern world is an illusion, Nietzsche does **indirectly** accept Plato's idea of 'timeless knowledge' which entails that man must be proactive in his search for truth. In [3], the author presents, "Like Plato, Nietzsche raises the question of the value of truth. Clearly, he rejects Plato's absolutism..yet he acknowledges the fact of the absolutist stance and understands this stance as essentially a moral stance." Plato believes truth is understanding the eternal, unchanging forms that are behind the imperfect world we see, which is the same for everyone, and exists beyond what

each person thinks or sees. So, I believe neither of the philosopher's conceptions can be denied since they are both right in their particular spheres of thinking and hence, cannot be compared.

(Word count of argument – 425)

References

[1] Friedrich Nietzsche, "On Truth and Lying in a Non-Moral Sense," in *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, ed. Raymond Geuss and Ronald Speirs, trans. Ron- ald Speirs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 139–153.

[2] Tracy B. Strong, "Language and Nihilism: Nietzsche's Critique of Epistemolo- gy," *Theory and Society 3* (1976): 242.

[3] Simpson, David I. Truth, truthfulness and philosophy in Plato and Nietzsche 2007, 339-360. https://ro.uow.edu.au/artspapers/465