



# nietzsche

Conferencia Internacional / International Conference

el devenir de la vida the becoming of life

## Actas / Proceedings

**Reshaping Human Conduct: Nietzsche's  
"Doctrine" of Will-To-Power As Mythologema**  
HORST HUTTER  
Concordia University  
Canadá

# Reshaping Human Conduct: Nietzsche's "Doctrine" of Will-To-Power As Mythologema<sup>1</sup>

HORST HUTTER

Concordia University

Canadá

Raised in Graz, Austria, Horst Hutter received a PhD from Stanford University. In 2006 he published *Shaping the Future: Nietzsche's New Regime of the Soul and Its Ascetic Practices* (Lexington Books). He teaches Political Philosophy at Concordia University.

A major ambiguity in Nietzsche's teaching of will-to-power derives from the fact that it involves both an exoteric and an esoteric conceptual vision. Exoterically it functions as a mythologema that links up with the established Christian myth of free will and responsibility. As such, it is designed to contribute to the deconstruction of the Christian myth by showing its incoherence and its consequences that have become increasingly harmful for human life. Esoterically, however, the mythologema reveals the abyssal void at the heart of the human condition that the doctrine of free will had hidden from human consciousness. Nietzsche's teaching thus is both the unveiling of the hidden, first step in the evolution of metaphysics, so central to Heidegger's interpretation of Nietzsche, and the beginning of a new and non-metaphysical understanding of human things

The following notebook entry from the summer and fall of 1887 explicitly distinguishes an exoteric aspect of the "doctrine" of will-to-power from its esoteric development:

Exoterisch \_\_\_\_\_ Esoterisch:

1\_\_ alles ist Wille gegen Willen

2\_\_ Es giebt gar keinen Willen

1\_\_ Causalismus

2\_\_ Es giebt nichts wie Ursache-Wirkung.<sup>2</sup>

There is no unitary subject of free will, hence also no faculty of will dominating the soul and thereby striving for power. The phrase will-to-power hence does not designate a unified force, a central principle from which everything would emanate. Rather, it refers to a latent plurality of drives, or to complexes of forces about to unite with, or repel each other, to associate with or dissociate themselves from each other. In defining itself, in any language (natural or artificial), the will-to-power harmonizes and hierarchizes the multiple forms of chaos; it does not destroy or reduce these, does not resolve their differences or their antagonisms. Affirmative and forceful, will-to-power appeals to variety, difference and plurality. Thus, power is not an aim of will for Nietzsche, for will seeks nothing exterior to itself. Power is not the "object" of will, but its

“subject”. Power is that which is sought in will. Will-to-power does not appropriate anything; it is not acquisitive but creative, it is indeed, the “unexhausted procreative life-will”<sup>3</sup>.

Nietzsche’s teaching of will-to-power begins in a deconstruction of the Christian concept of free will, which, according to Nietzsche distorts the human understanding of human agency. Christian doctrine presents a picture of moral agency in terms of an incoherent notion of the voluntary subject, such that the feeling of power has no necessary relationship to our actual powers of agency. Morality obstructs the human powers of ethical reflection and evaluations in that it presents moral values as unconditional and independent of any human volition. This “perspective” then prevents us from critically appraising morality, since it is claimed to be universal and unconditional. If the teaching of will-to-power is interpreted to presuppose the Christian notion of free will, it becomes a fascistic “doctrine”.

Many commentators have been bewildered by the wild contradictoriness of this so-called “doctrine” and have not been able to interpret it in terms of a logically coherent systematic analysis of the fundamental nature of reality. This seems to be mainly because scholars on Nietzsche have operated with conceptions of reasoning and have attempted to find a system where Nietzsche believed that there could not be a system. It is for this reason that I have placed the word “doctrine” in my title in quotation marks. In the following I shall try to make sense of this very troubling teaching, and I shall present it not as one doctrine or as two opposing set of doctrines, but as a set of insights and formulations that, in their very resistance to logical analysis, mirror the resistance of reality to all forms of human understanding, be they religious, philosophical or scientific. Nietzsche does not tire to affirm that we do not have the truth; the saying supposedly inscribed on the ancient statue of the Goddess Neith at Sais, Egypt, namely; “I am all that has been, that is now and that shall be, and no mortal has raised my veil”, would seem to fit exactly Nietzsche’s vision of the labyrinthine chaos in which we are forced to live and through which we need to find our way.

My analysis will first deal with the exoteric formulation of the concept of will to power. In this I will briefly assert how different forms of political understanding, conservative, progressive, fascist and communist are compatible with the assumption that reality is at bottom nothing but will to power. This does not mean that Nietzsche has advocated or implied any such political doctrine, but merely that both a politics of aristocratic and anti-democratic radicalism, or a “progressive” politics merely obscured by Nietzsche’s faulty assumptions, are possible historical outcomes of the disaggregation of the Christian myth. I mean to say by this that the major, violently destructive political movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century may be equally seen as predictable outcomes of what Nietzsche terms nihilism. This does not mean that he had any intention of advocating or favoring any such kind of politics, for prediction is by no means advocacy. In this limited sense Nietzsche is not a “political thinker” in the way in which the term “political thinker” has been used by major interpreters such as Kaufmann and Leiter, among others. Rather in this respect, and only in this limited view, may Nietzsche be considered an “individualist”.

My second elaboration will focus on the seemingly more interesting, esoteric aspect of the teaching of will-to-power. For this and for everything, which follows, I shall invoke the image of two “divinities”, important for Nietzsche, namely Ariadne. and

Dionysus. We may have recourse to the legend of Theseus, the founder of “masculine” political culture, who seemingly abandoned Ariadne on Naxos. Moreover, he did this despite the fact that, without the thread given him by Ariadne, he would never have been able to extricate himself from the lair of the Minotaur. Theseus, despite his many good qualities, thus revealed himself volatile and only useful for a while. Ultimately, Ariadne will be and has been obliged to find a better “husband” in the other Nietzschean divinity, the enigmatic Dionysus. If reality is indeed as chaotic, as Nietzsche seemed to think, and if it is nothing but will-to-power, we shall have to find an appropriate thread of Ariadne by which Dionysus may escape from the predations of the monster at the heart of the labyrinth called “cosmos”.

If we reflect on the fact that the human cosmos has hitherto been largely arranged, governed and designed by “males”, and that these arrangements are ending, we shall have to look for the means to escape the Minotaur in the “female” half of the human endo-cosmos. What Nietzsche judiciously has proposed as the guiding thread for us to follow, is the “body”. To be sure, body here is to be understood as the *Leib*, the term which in German is linked to life and which Nietzsche meant to use instead of the word *Koerper*. The later seems to be derived from the Latin *Corpus* and is as such already a prejudgment of the living human totality, implying an attitude of contempt for the body which in the Christian myth is to be mortified and chastised as merely a vessel of the “soul”. English only has one word for the container of the “soul”, namely body that in its etymological roots in Old High German is derived from *bottich*, the meaning of which is vessel, quite similar to the Hindu *avatar*. This forces us to focus on the here and now, on this world, and on ourselves in this world alone, and to let go of all “beyonds”, all masculine “spirits” and “minds”. It means to get in touch with and study that which we are as living and ensouled totalities, at least for a while, and thereby to become aware of the enigmatic unity of multiple and opposing struggles and forces that we are. Nietzsche’s Ariadne thus proposes to us to use as our saving thread the *Leitfaden des Leibes*, the “guiding thread of the body”. Consciousness thereby would be seen as a mere instrument of the “great reason of the body”.

However, before entering a more detailed discussion of the teaching of will-to-power, exoterically as well as esoterically, it would seem appropriate first to see how Nietzsche defined these two terms. I base myself for this mainly on aphorism 30 of Beyond Good and Evil. The distinction between esoteric and exoteric discussed therein does not draw the line between the two horizontally but vertically. This represents a departure from the distinction as it is inherited from virtually every religious and philosophical tradition. Usually the focus is on a line drawn between an inside and an outside. In Nietzsche, by contrast, we may read: “Our supreme insights must-and should- sound like follies, in certain cases like crimes, when they come impermissibly to the ears of those who are not predisposed and predetermined for them.” These insights come from...” heights of the soul seen from which even tragedy ceases to be tragic.” Such insights might be dangerous and destructive for the common run of humans who, one might add, might need their mythologies, so as to lead tolerably decent lives and to be able to give whatever tendernesses and kindnesses they possess. Thus there are dangerous books, such as presumably Nietzsche’s own, provided always the caveat that they are understood, which, if fully understood, might destroy weaker humans. There are naturally also low-life books that would “smell” badly for lofty souls.<sup>4</sup>

One might add here that Nietzsche's "dangerous" books and teachings have very frequently been misinterpreted. It is without a doubt that their author was aware of such possible misinterpretations and still continued to profess such hazardous "doctrines" as precisely the famous will-to-power. It has often been asserted that authors are and should consider themselves responsible for their texts. One is tempted to think here about the strictures against writing voiced in Plato's Phaedrus as just about the best yet said about dangerous books such as Nietzsche's and very much also Plato's own..As ameliorating "excuses", which I do not think are necessary for either author, one might point to the fact that the manners of writing chosen by Plato, namely the dialogue, and by Nietzsche, the aphorism, largely obviate any condemnation of these thinkers. Both of these forms of writing make access to the meaning very difficult and quite beyond the capacities of most readers. Shallow reading or reading like plundering soldiers will at best result in confused impressions. In addition, no author can really be held responsible for confused impressions of readers. Besides, both seem to have been motivated by a deep and generous therapeutic intention which required them to present their dangerous" doctrines" to posterity. despite the possible dangers of misreading Hence, it would seem very misguided, as some have seen fit, to interpret the exoteric side of Nietzsche's teaching of will-to-power as a licensing for the predations of "SS tank commanders.. Nor can Plato be really held responsible for postulating the so-called "theory of ideas" which has so frequently been misread to license repressive moralisms.

We might in this respect also keep in mind the all-important distinction between predictions and mere descriptions, on the one hand, and the advocacy of any mode of conduct, on the other. Thus, when Nietzsche predicted that the period of nihilism which humanity would be obliged to endure for some 200 years, he cannot be held responsible for this calamity. Nor can he be thought to cause or advocate the terrible wars that he foresaw in saying "that there will be wars like there have never been wars before". Besides, no physician can be held responsible for the diseases he diagnoses. Indeed, his entire effort not only is deconstructive but, more importantly, aims at providing humans the means to survive and emerge victoriously from the terrible catastrophe of nihilism This having been said, we must not loose sight of the importance of myhtologema for the shaping of human conduct, despite the fact that "thick-witted literalists" are at all times able to distort the best teachings, as the history of Christianity or any other universal religion so amply demonstrates. This would imply that such individuals should, if possible, be kept away from power, which should always only be entrusted to persons capable to assume the "perspective from above." Yet a fuller discussion of these issues will be possible only, once the esoteric aspects of will-to-power have been more fully elaborated.

The distinction between an esoteric perspective from above and an exoteric one from below implies as a corollary the distinction between the few human beings who are capable of understanding the esoteric message of a myth and the many that are not. Both divisions go counter to the myths of democratic egalitarianism and are offensive to the modern ethos. We nay follow Nietzsche and hold that the main source of the belief in the equality of all human beings is the Christian doctrine that all humans are equal in the eyes of God. Nevertheless, the Christian teaching had also always allowed for human inequality based on a fundamental equality. From within the Christian perspective, this contradiction could always be sublated both exoterically as well as

esoterically, but only for as long as the basis of the distinction as well as its sublation in the image of an all-god and omnipotent divine maker remained intact. The dissolution and disaggregation of this image, however, is precisely the root of the crisis that Nietzsche has identified and designated as nihilism. This means that the old sublation of the contradiction between human inequality and human equality can no longer be sustained. The dissolution of the image of divinity, however, has also made other equally important aspects of the Christian myth untenable. The most important of these aspects is the myth of human responsibility, human power and free will. The waning of the image of the divinity has thus led to the undermining of the entire metaphysical edifice that alone is able to sustain the religiosity of those who have been termed “the children of Abraham”.

Nietzsche’s term for the “onto-theological” interpretation of reality is the “metaphysics of the hangman”<sup>5</sup>My argument holds that the mythologema of will-to-power is precisely designed to undo this metaphysics of the hangman, to save exoterically its positive aspects for the human future and to endow it with a new esoteric understanding of the problems of the formation of human willing. This esoteric understanding would then be more adequate for saving the phenomenon of man while preserving the positive aspects of Abrahamite monotheisms. This implies a proper appreciation of the Janus-faced nature of Nietzsche’s teaching, looking backwards from within the present historical moment of crisis and aiming to utilize the opportunities given by the crisis, and then attempting to look forward to save the positive and overcome the negative. If seen as a “doctrine” will-to-power may appear as if Nietzsche was engaged in an “exaltation of the will”, but this appearance quickly dissolves once we become aware of esoteric aspects of the Janus-faced vision. The understanding of these matters is rendered very difficult, precisely because modern thinkers in their eagerness to deconstruct the Christian myths have lost mostly the ability to understand the role of myths in the shaping of human conduct. Enlightenment thinking has valiantly attempted to reduce all *mythos* to *logos*, as well as all ethical engagement to moralistic exhortation and mere prescription. It has lost sight of the fundamental insight of all ancient philosophers as well as ancient founders of religion that merely to exhort one, a few or many to a course of desirable action by no means suffices to endow them with the ability to follow such exhortations What is needed is a new form of praxis which has to be established first esoterically and then exoterically. The mythologema of will-to-power is designed to do just that. Let me now turn to a closer examination of how this mythologema aims to do this, first by looking backwards and then by looking forwards. To quote Hölderlin who is very close to Nietzsche, we may begin by reminding ourselves “where there is danger, the saving aspects also grow”.

I shall begin my discussion of the esoteric aspect of Nietzsche’s teaching by briefly affirming that the doctrine of will-to-power does indeed reveal the hidden impetus behind the long tradition of Western metaphysics. If assimilated to this tradition, it loses many of its internal contradictions. The contradictions that remain then are merely the ones that had always been a part of the history of religious doctrines. This tradition may be seen to begin with the contradiction between two postulates of the one true God who is the omnipotent and all-just maker of everything. The claim that this divinity is the only true divinity establishes a rather measureless claim to total power by any group, collectivity, or ruling stratum that claims it. Such a claim justifies any

measure of prosecution and oppression. It also defines for posterity the only "proper" relation between women and men. The story of this divinity is from the beginning set on the subordination of women in that the first act of revolt against the royal absolutism of the true god originates from the weakness of the male before the seductive powers of the female. Human willing originates in an act of revolt, inspired by sexuality that is all the more unjustified as it is caused by the female half of humanity whose only proper attitude is one of obedience. An entire program for a form of political sociology as well as a structure of sub- and superordination, in Nietzsche's term a *Herrschaftsgebilde* is thereby set in motion. It is hence hardly surprising that the legends surrounding the movements of the one true divinity so rarely tell of acts of kindness, but are replete with tales of cruelty and often genocidal violence. All succeeding humans are ipso facto sinful and whatever good they can hope for is due only to the one truth, the one absolute rightness and the one power. Truly a hangman's understanding of reality.

The addition of powerful Platonic and Aristotelian reasoning to Abrahamite monotheism then adds enormous theoretical sophistication to these claims for absolute power. It does so by opening up the power of conceptual manipulation and the good offices of a mathematical domination of reality via the famous so-called "theory of ideas". These structures of reasoning then endow its proponents with the ability to legitimate all forms of manipulation of humans and beasts by traveling to and from the *mundus intelligibilis* at will. Thereby technology and the sciences are enabled to perform their striking offices. However, so goes Nietzsche's reasoning, these very instruments then also make the metaphysics that they initially support increasingly unbelievable. The *mundus intelligibilis* has become the internet, which, if it were seen as the mind of god, would lead one to conclude that God has a very dirty mind indeed.

Both sources of the Western tradition of metaphysics are revealed or unveiled in Nietzsche's doctrine of will-to-power as mighty and quasi-magical claims to entirely human power. No divine offices seem to be involved. It may be left to speculation, whether or not the originators of these two sources thought of them as claims to power. Thus, I would be tempted to argue that the interpretation of either Platonic or Aristotelian reasoning as "metaphysical" (in the sense of describing a better world as this one), is, being charitable to the long line of theologians beginning with Augustine, a mighty misreading. Even supposing the honesty of devout humans, suffering from "earthly" existence, however, the metaphysical worldview has led to the erection of enormous and now planet-wide systems of domination. This may have been on the agenda of less honest but very clever power seekers; these may have seen in the exploitation of the suffering of millions and of their desire to escape from this suffering an opportunity to rule by promising a "golden" beyond to which they might escape. This power might have been immeasurably magnified by the ability of rulers believably to be able to control access to different parts of the beyond, some of them extremely unpleasant. In Nietzsche's view, it is now all over with such speculations, and his analysis in the *Genealogy* has shown quite convincingly, how and why such beliefs in escapes from the world as a series of living hells have ever found acceptance. Given the human propensity to cruelty, escapes to the beyond have been rendered partially believable by promising the many suffering humans the possibility to get even with their tormentors by giving them also the opportunity to be cruel against others.

The human species has succeeded in establishing its dominion over the entire planet. "Metaphysics" has served well as the chief instrument in this conquest. Now metaphysics is on its way out, but power and the struggle for it remains. Indeed, the aspect of totality has rendered the struggles for power fiercer, more lethal. The human enterprise is now on the verge of threatening the very survival of humanity, at least of humanity in the form of the "last man." Little has changed for the daily lives of most humans. They struggle, attempt to realize their petty advantages, suffer, reproduce, resent each other's successes and then disappear. Most still firmly believe that they are free and responsible, that they can "do", despite the actuality of willess decadence. Besides, they now have the internet and they have the hope of technological utopias. They still go, and perhaps even in increasing numbers, to their temples, churches and mosques to pray. Many expect the imminent end of the world. They are full of pious illusions about the beyond, which are not at all destroyed by will-to-power understood exoterically. Indeed, I would argue that the many need these illusions to render their lives tolerable. They can continue to believe that they are masters of their fate. This also permits them to go on punishing and thus to act out their frustrations with their actual weakness. Also and importantly, ritual actions and prayers put individuals at least a little in touch with their *Leiblichkeit* and with a community of significant others. The main importance of ritual actions in communal settings seems to be the fact that they involve bodily movements. Such movements tend to change moods, restore good spirits and put the little ego and the little, much-vaunted intellect more in touch with "the great reason of the body". The addition of music, singing, chanting and dancing adds considerably to the beneficent effects of religious ritual. Music has a powerful formative influence on the calming of largely unconscious fears, anxieties and rages, the principal manifestations of that part of the human totality, of the *Leib*, that is called spirit. Except in moments of threat, dangers and under the influence of meditative practices, the operations of the spirit remain unknown to the consciousness of persons so moved. Knowing about the importance of music for Nietzsche, we might well understand his statement that "without music, life would be a mistake" At any rate, religious rituals, accompanied by music, is one of the main means for shaping the souls of suffering humanity. Religions in this sense are "gymnastics of willing."

Meanwhile, however, a new world may be in the making, one prepared for all by the self-transformative labors of the few free spirits, capable of esoteric vision from above. It is now time to describe this possible world and how it changes and may yet change for these few, and ultimately, of course, for all. It is Nietzsche's hope that these few will form an *order* of free spirits who are teachers, healers and priests in one, on the model of the ancient shamanic therapists as described in the corpus Hippocraticum. Following these writings and inspired by pre-Socratic thinkers such as Heraclitus and Empedocles, the esoteric understanding of human things found in Nietzsche is in this sense diagnostic, therapeutic and profoundly political. I shall now turn to a brief description of his healing vision. I shall base my remarks mainly on some crucial, deconstructive aphorisms of Nietzsche's great no-saying and no-doing book *Beyond Good and Evil*. This will be followed by a discussion of some significant aphorisms from the *Nachlass*. Together these statements permit us to envision a new type of philosophical anthropology, entirely non-metaphysical, this-worldly and focused on the

present moment which, however, encompasses the lived no-longer as well as the desired not-yet.

Two concepts that are firmly rooted in popular, religious and philosophical visions are the notion of an ego as a permanent center of thinking and the belief that this ego is endowed with freedom of decision. Indeed, it is difficult to imagine a human order in which the ego as manifest in every statement that features “I”, such as in “I think” is not a part of every day discourse and understanding. Suffice it to mention here the famous Cartesian *Cogito, ergo sum*, which is one of the pillars of the whole of modern philosophy. To be sure, it may only be the philosophical elaboration of a popular prejudice, to reason in the manner of Nietzsche. Similarly, it is difficult to imagine a political order in which the majority of participants are not held to be responsible for their actions. Mental incompetents and children, to be sure, are classes of persons that are defined as being exterior to the pale of responsibility. The entire edifice of what is called “criminal justice” is defined by the supposition that individuals have free will and hence cannot usually claim incompetence and lack of responsibility for their acts of omission and commission. Legal codes specify circumstances rather precisely in which responsibility does not hold. Yet Nietzsche has attacked both the suppositions of the ego and of free will as mere political fictions that may be useful and unavoidable. His attack on these hallowed and very necessary notions, however, merely draws theoretical conclusions from political, social and psychological developments that are the consequence of the waning of their religious and philosophical supports. The rise of the empirical sciences and the establishment of technological orders have undermined the metaphysical bases that had made empirical science possible in the first place. The “death of God” has opened the door to that most uninvited guest of all, the “uncanny guest” called nihilism. The entry of this guest has led to a profound spiritual dis-ease, a malady that calls for the most strenuous diagnostic and therapeutic labors. Indeed, this dis-ease is serious enough to threaten the very survival of the earth as the only home for humanity and its future well-being.

The yes-saying portion of Nietzsche’s tremendous efforts is entirely devoted to provide the spiritual therapies and relevant diagnoses to deal with the present crisis. These efforts may be understood as an appeal to humanity or at least its leaders and so-far perhaps unnoticed philosophical counselors, to wake up, described by the phrase: “stay loyal to the earth”. The no-saying and no-doing sides of Nietzsche’s teaching derive from the rhetorical structure of his writings as unfinished, suggestive thoughts that need to be completed by their readers in acts of creative reading. Learning how to read Nietzsche well then becomes already a practice of meditation that irrevocably changes the subconscious and unconscious sides of the souls of readers. Naturally, the superficial reading of which the majorities of contemporary literate publics are only capable will most likely not open the secret chambers of his texts. For that matter, even a great many Nietzsche scholars have not much advanced beyond clumsy literalisms that require a prior “philosophical translation” of his texts. They tend to assimilate them to preconceived notions of what it means to “do philosophy” or what is meant by the “political”. Hence the thesis that Nietzsche is not a “political thinker” and that he is primarily concerned with the creative individual, has so frequently been repeated. Nietzsche’s critique of Christian morality seems to be a profoundly political

act. Yet scholars discuss it as non-political in contexts in which the political agenda is so frequently dominated by what has been termed “morality screamers”.

The no-saying and no-doing aphorisms, mostly implicitly and sometimes explicitly, suggest cures and therapies that address the diagnoses that they identify. A striking example of a seemingly only no-saying aphorism is number 17 in *Beyond* which states that “a thought comes when ‘it’ wants, and not when ‘I’ want;” The text then continues to state that the ego, the subject, is only a supposition, not a fact and certainly not “an immediate certainty” This falsification is based on the reasoning that every activity requires someone who is active, every deed requires a doer. However, this form of reasoning merely follows a “grammatical convention.” The ego hence is a grammatical fiction. We might add that it is a fiction that is activated by unknown and perhaps unknowable processes deeply buried in the unconscious. We might further reflect on the fact that this type of fictionalization is the hallmark of every form of “primitive” mythological thinking which needs to see personal agency behind every natural process. It is well known to ethnographers that in many societies all illnesses are ascribed to maleficent forces, to the agency of witches. All human doing is thus also believed to be influencable by magical operations such as is the case with the widespread practices of voodoo. Upon this reasoning hence, the Cartesian cogito is not that far removed from voodoo and our entire culture has never left and perhaps cannot leave its basis in magic and, as I would argue, in mythology.<sup>6)</sup>

This seemingly completely deconstructive aphorism, however, also points to a reconstructive practice. It indicates a vast realm of unconscious processes that shape the coming and going of conscious thoughts. The much-lauded “transcendental” sphere of the mind would seem to be rather minimal. If I have to admit this, and I do not see, how I cannot admit this, I am thereby pushed into a sustained self-examination. I have to withdraw into solitude periodically so as to study my own principle of association of thoughts and come to understand why particular thoughts come when they do. I must become self-aware and increase the reaches of my transcendental mind, and I must in particular watch over all urges to act, based on my random thoughts. I must learn how to resist thoughts accompanied by strong emotions by refusing to identify with them. I must hence develop and follow my inner voice and I must find meditative practices that best put me in touch with the deep structures of my thinking. I will, furthermore, most likely need the help of others in restraining myself from acting on the strong emotionalities of anxieties, fears, angers and rages, all of which may quite innocently and impersonally assault me from within myself. One thing remains certain, even after Nietzsche’s deconstruction of the cogito: I need a relatively firm ego identity, in order to participate in the political order in which fate and choice have placed me. I can do this the better; the more I get in touch with my inner compulsions without being enslaved by them. To be sure, engaging myself in a program of meditative self-examination requires leisure and freedom from the pressure of daily routines. Now Nietzsche personally enjoyed leisure and hence was able to acquire what may be perhaps deeper forms of self-knowledge than that available to most. His illnesses were a major factor in enabling him to acquire such self-knowledge and help him make the gist of it available to his posterity of free spirits who may be privileged by their lines of fate to follow him in their own wholly individual meditative practices.

One thing may be said with absolute certainty, namely, that no political order can be sustained in which the majority of humans do not believably say and do I. The majority, in any case, are held captive in their identities by the world of work and by economic necessities. However, they also need meditative practices that have for the most part been made available to them by the religious traditions in which their unconscious psychic processes have been shaped. The great danger that Nietzsche has perceived in this respect comes from the void created by the destruction of religious myths in the modern age. The many secular ideologies of the past century that functioned like religious myths, such as the varieties of fascisms and of socialisms have not been able to provide the meaning structures and meditative self-practices of the religions to which they succeeded. They were able to claim the loyalties of millions but did not and could not fulfill their hopes and spiritual longings. They were part of the revolutions of nihilism and as such led to incredibly destructive predations in which the powerful negative emotionalities held in check by religions were unleashed. It is Nietzsche's hope that the order of free-spirited philosophers, healers and priests will in the future be able to create practices of living for themselves as well as for all humans, based in a new vision of soul and its making. This new vision would then also entail a different kind of non-metaphysical line of willing, not oriented to any divinity beyond, but to the earthly divinities of Dionysus and Ariadne. The culture of festivals, dances and rhythmic movements created in their names would then, so it is hoped, make available human choices that are neither wholly free-willed nor wholly determined. They would be choices originating in the deep structures of the *Leib* In following the guiding threads of their bodies, the new types of leaders could and would engage in policies that are loyal to the earth.

Just as little as no political order is even remotely conceivable without individuals reliably saying and doing "I, so no order can be imagined in which persons cannot engage in sustaining their choices in lines of willing. Nietzsche's teaching is particularly suggestive in his critique and re-conceptualization of the notion of the will. Aphorism 19 of *Beyond* provides a very detailed and broad-based phenomenology of what goes on in a human soul when it wills. I propose the term phenomenology here to indicate a method of analysis that aims to get away from the "concept" and back to "things" as they are. In so doing, this long text first suggests that philosophers have been erroneously convinced that everything that can be known about the will is known. They have been seduced into this by the fictionality of all concepts, which suggest to incautious reasoners that the existence of one word, such as the word "will", points to a unity of facts that are so named. Schopenhauer here, just as most others, seems to have been a victim of a late Platonism that merely endows popular prejudices with philosophical dignity. Nietzsche hence proposes that we examine in detail the very complicated and very conflictual multiplicity of a human soul that wills. Willing involves a complex of feelings that indicate an "away from" and a "toward", the unconscious muscular movements and tensions in a given direction that are evoked by these feelings, as well as overall guiding thoughts. More importantly, however, willing involves a splitting of the unitary self into a dividuality of commanding and obeying portions and parts. The commanding parts believe that they will be obeyed and are proud in overcoming the necessary resistance of the obeying parts." Free" will thus reveals itself as an "affect of command" that reorganizes the movements of the human totality in an

intended direction. "Freedom of the will'-that is the word for that multiple condition of pleasure of the willing person who commands and simultaneously sets itself in unity with the executives".

The willing totality, the *Leib*, enjoys an increase in the feeling of power which is augmented by the commanding portions also enjoying the pleasurable feelings of the serving portions in being willing instruments. This analysis then leads to a mighty conclusion: The willing person, in enjoying the overcoming of resistance of the serving parts reveals the "instruments of execution' as a multiplicity of "'underwills' or undersouls-" for...- "our Leib is only a social structure of many souls"-... This important concluding thought seems to have very profound political implications. It describes the human totality as a political structure which, if properly designed in successful lines of willing, is a political community in which the ruling classes identify with all successes of the totality. Of special importance also in this analysis is the role of the undersouls whose job it is to resist and the more intelligent their resistance, the better the totality may be in its overall organization.<sup>7</sup> The human totality, the *Leib*, thus becomes the primary "body politic", certainly a very ancient metaphor indeed. The organization of this primal "body politic" then may be seen to serve as the model for the "body politic" of a human community comprising many individuals. In view of the frequent description of Nietzsche's political theory as an "aristocratic radicalism", the role of the serving underwills and how they should resist intelligently appears to me of special significance. Could there be here a hint of a contamination by democratic thinking? For how may resistance to the commands of superiors be exercised most intelligently to maximize the overall success of the community? Do the commanding "aristocrats" depend on intelligent resistance from executive underwills? For an answer to these and related questions we must turn now to Nietzsche's thinking on the specifics of the organization of the primal body politic, the *Leib*.

In a long aphorism from the *Nachlass* from the summer of 1885, the body is described a structure of r multiple ruling, obeying and in turn ruling and obeying structures that interact in such a way that the whole can persist in time for a while.<sup>8</sup> Thus, we read:

"The magnificent connection of the most manifold lives, the outer and inner ordered sequence of higher and lower activities, the thousand fold forms of obedience, which is definitely not a blind, far less mechanical obedience, but a choosing, considerate, intelligent and even resisting obedience-this whole phenomenon body is, when measured by any intellectual standard, as far superior to our consciousness, our mind, our conscious thinking, feeling and willing, as is algebra to the multiplication table."<sup>9</sup>

Further on then, conscious thinking, feeling and willing is described as an operation for which materials are pre-selected, simplified, and presented to the willing intellect for choosing and deciding. All decisions, dreams and reflections hence are surface phenomena that depend on the underground activities and conflicts of lower forms of choosing, obeying and commanding forms of life that make the overall survival of the totality, the *Leib*, possible. The human totality hence is a magnificent political order. It is easy to see that no existing people, nation, or state even comes close in its functioning to the beauty of the arrangements of this primal body politic.

At this point we might ask how this naturally given conglomerate of living forces can serve as a guiding thread for the erection of artificial constructs such as a new political order. Bodies are also acculturated and their specific programming, derived from different culture, classes and economic circumstances are deeply embodied in the unconscious processes of living humans. Consciousness is, so Nietzsche held, also materially shaped by linguistic conventions and above all by religions and moralities. Indeed, religions and moralities are the major human instruments for shaping human nature. Different cultures thus produce different bodies with different forms of thinking, different habits of emotionalities and different ways of dealing with anxieties and rages. Even if a given morality may only be a “sign language of affects”, it is nevertheless a human creation in which philosophical founders of religions and shamanic originators of ways of life establish lines of willing, in which human striving is oriented to a *summum bonum*. These lines of willing require obedience in one direction, an obedience which is always modeled and influenced by the naturally given obedience of the in-born configuration of affects of command and obedience. Every morality is thus both natural and anti-natural. It is from one perspective, a “major stupidity” in which natural inclinations are suppressed and distorted. The positing of the Abrahamic divinity, as an all-caring, omniscient, just and demanding entity beyond all human willing has been a major force for the shaping of human willing. It has imposed on each of the faithful a constant mental but invisible presence with a powerful expectation of a final judgment day. The “Christian-moral interpretation of all personal happenings for ‘the honor of God:’ and for the ‘salvation of the soul’:- this tyranny, this arbitrary authority, this strict and grandiose stupidity has educated the spirit”.<sup>10</sup>

The suggestion to follow the guiding thread of the body for a re-designing of human conduct has thus to begin from the recognition that the bodies that exist, are Christian, Jewish, Moslem and Buddhist bodies, each with its own unconscious *habitus*, fears and hopes. Human willing in each of these forms has been established as a force of nature; as it were. All humans come from one of these traditions and, even when they no longer uphold their religions, they are still shaped in their unconscious by their traditions. We might thus say that there are Jewish, Christian and Moslem “atheists”.

The free-spirited philosophers of the future must begin by understanding and dealing with their own unconscious moldings. For the reshaping of their wills they must accept and understand how their wills have been shaped by their religious backgrounds. The great insight from which they start is that the religiously guided willings from which they begin are entirely human wills-to-power. Moreover, differently shaped wills-to-power are now in conflict with one another, a form of struggle for planetary dominion in which it is still undecided who will be the “masters of the earth”. Esoterically they need to conclude that their own wills are yet to be created and shaped. The guiding threads of their differently shaped bodies need to be integrated with one another in friendship and marital communities that unite different religious backgrounds. The order of healers, new shamans, physicians and philosophical teachers that should aspire to form should integrate different religious shapings. This will require conscious efforts over several generations, efforts that can only be undertaken in pluralistic political orders. The coming struggles might be fierce and might lead to the destruction of humanity as we know it. Hence the exoteric mythologema of will-to-power needs to be addressed with intelligence. This probably requires nothing less than the founding of

a new religion for which Nietzsche has suggested his teaching of the eternal recurrence as the guiding thought. The affirmation of earthly existence thereby initiated would lead to new forms of festivals, dances and new modes of religious ecstasy. It would also entail new forms of religious rituals for re-shaping the wills of the many, rituals that would emphasize joyful dancing and transporting forms of music that celebrate finite life on earth. Dionysus might yet return for a joint celebration with Apollo.

## Notes

---

<sup>1</sup> All citations to Nietzsche's published and unpublished writings are from: Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari, eds. Friedrich Nietzsche. *Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*. Muenchen: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1999. This will be abbreviated as *KSA*, followed by volume and page numbers I will also give abbreviations of the few English titles of published works.

<sup>2</sup> *KSA* 12, 184.

<sup>3</sup> *TSZ*, II, 12; *KSA* 4, 147.

<sup>4</sup> *KSA* 5, 48-49.

<sup>5</sup> *KSA* 6, 95.

<sup>6</sup> *KSA* 5, 30-31.

<sup>7</sup> *KSA* 5, 30-31.

<sup>8</sup> *KSA* 11, 576-579.

<sup>9</sup> *KSA* 11, 577.

<sup>10</sup> *BGE*, 188; *KSA* 5, 108-110.

---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Ansell-Pearson, Keith, ed. *A Companion to Nietzsche*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009

Bertram, Ernst. *Nietzsche. Versuch einer Mythologie*. Berlin: Geprg Bondi, 1919.

Gerhardt, Volker. *Vom Willen zur Macht*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1996.

Hauck, Wilhelm Albert. *Das Geheimnis des Lebens: Naturanschauung u Gottesauf=fassung Friedrich Christoph Oetingers*. Heidelberg: Winter, 1947.

Heidegger, Martin. *Nietzsche. 2 Volumes*. Pfullingen: Guenther Neske: 1961.

Mueller-Lauter, Wolfgang. *Nietzsche: Seine Philosophie der Gegensaetze und Die Gegensaetze seiner Philosophie*. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971.

Nietzsche, Friedrich. *Werke: Kritische Studienausgabe*. Giorgio Colli and Mazzino Montinari eds., Muenchen: Deutscher Taschenbuchverlag, 1999.

Schipperges, Heinrich. *Am Leitfaden des Leibes: zur Anthropologik und Thera=peutik Friedrich Niezsche's*. Stuttgart: Ernst Klettverlag, 1975.