

# ARTISTIC POWER AND THE WILL TO POWER AS ART

## El poder artístico y la voluntad de poder como arte

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**ABSTRACT:** Nietzsche's teachings on power are often confined to his conception of the will to power, which has been narrowly interpreted as political power, 'political' understood in the limited sense of state ruling. Two things must be noted here: first, Nietzsche's philosophy of power exceeds the will to power, regardless of the fact that this concept played a significant role in Nietzsche's late writings. In this paper, I plan to show its broader context, including the feeling of power, affect, and other related notions. Second, the first time Nietzsche coins the term, the «will to power,» the first occurrence appears in his *Nachlass*, it is used within the context of artistic power, as he discusses Wagner and the power of music. While examining power in its broadest significance, I will focus on the power of creativity, that is, artistic power, and how that plays a crucial role in Nietzsche's works from the beginning to the end, without dismissing other forms of power, or will to power.

**Keywords:** Will to power – feeling of power – plastic and artistic power

**RESUMEN:** Las enseñanzas de Nietzsche sobre el poder se limitan a menudo a su concepción de la voluntad de poder, que se ha interpretado en sentido estricto como poder político, «político» entendido en el sentido limitado de gobierno del Estado. En primer lugar, la filosofía del poder de Nietzsche va más allá de la voluntad de poder, sin tener en cuenta que este concepto desempeñó un papel importante en los últimos escritos de Nietzsche. Este ensayo pretende mostrar su contexto más amplio, incluyendo el sentimiento de poder, el afecto y otras nociones relacionadas. En segundo lugar, la primera vez que Nietzsche emplea el término «voluntad de poder» en su *Nachlass*, lo hace en el contexto del poder artístico, al hablar de Wagner y el poder de la música. Aunque examina el poder en su significado más amplio, este artículo se centra en el poder artístico y muestra cómo desempeña un papel crucial en las obras de Nietzsche.

**Palabras clave:** Voluntad de poder – sentimiento de poder – poder plástico y artístico.

## 1. THE WILL TO POWER

The first occurrence of the term will to power is in the *Nachlass* and dates back to 1876-77, shortly before the writing and publication of *Daybreak* in which one finds many ideas on power. However, Nietzsche's reflections on power precede these dates; we find many aphorisms in *Human, All Too Human* and notes on power prior to the coinage of the term «will to power.» In a note from 1876 (KS 8, 351), Nietzsche lists «On Power» as one of the themes to reflect or write on. In some earlier notes from 1875, Nietzsche thinks through the problem of power with such phrases as gaining power (KS 8, 234), desire for power, power for love, and influence of power (KS 8, 249-250); in these sections, his reflections focus on Wagner and some his operas. Power in this context is considered mostly as artistic power. Another recurrent theme in the same passages is 'ananke,' that is, cosmological necessity. For Nietzsche, the problem of the power of creativity within the context of cosmological necessity, this Heraclitean aporia in aesthetic cosmology, remains his lifelong philosophical problem. The text where the will to power appears in the *Nachlass* for the first time runs as follows:

The main element of ambition is to come to the feeling of its power. The joy of power is not to trace back onto that which we rejoice, to remain admired in the opinion of others. Praise and blame, love and hate are the same for the ambition seeker (the ambitious) who wills power.

Fear of power (negative) and will to power (positive) explain our strong regard for the opinion of human beings.

Power lust—the lust for power can be explained by the dislike (or disgust) of dependence or powerlessness, experienced in hundred (thousand) ways (KSA 8, 249-250).

In this note above one sees the larger context of power in the first formulation of «the will to power.» Joy of power, lust for power and powerlessness are reflected upon, and the will to power is considered to be positive. I will argue that Nietzsche does not see power or the will to power only as positive, which one sees in his other writings. But here what is highlighted is not so much the form of power as positive or negative as how one relates to power, that, one's disposition to power. Are we afraid of power or do we desire or will it? This question is presented within the framework of ambition, the power that underlies ambition, the relationship to others, dependence and independence. Before we examine Nietzsche's notes from the other *Nachlass*, let's now turn our attention to his published works.

The first appearance of the term, «will to power,» in Nietzsche's published writings is in *Zarathustra* I, «On the Thousand and One Goals.» It appears within the context of Zarathustra's journey, the journey of self-creation and

-transformation. As Zarathustra seeks and creates himself in his solitude —his cave is one of the symbols for this —, he interacts with a variety of types that are in different proximities to him; Zarathustra himself symbolizes the type of value-creator, albeit of a different kind than has existed hitherto; one can go in this journey with Zarathustra to the extent that one is a seeker and a creator too.

Now, in his journey, what is the greatest power that Zarathustra has encountered? It is the power of good and evil (170), which means, the power of values. Right here, in the first appearance of the will to power in this work, one can understand what is at stake for Nietzsche, the question of values, and the problematic of power is posed within the context of value; good and evil, tablets or tablets of the good, all these expressions imply values and valuations). Nietzsche comes back to the question of value often in his works from 1880s; here is a note from 1885: «Hidden behind the many disputes about ‘knowledge and belief’, Utilitarianism and intuitionism, is *this* question of *valuation*.» (WLN, 2). All that humans have are values and those things that are based on values; moralities, religions, sciences et al are all values and stem from valuations. «By morality, I understand a system of valuations which is contiguous with a being’s condition of life.» (WLN, 16). All valuations are interpretations and based on ordering of rank; one prioritizes this over that in the act of valuation.

After Zarathustra, in «On the Thousand and One Goals,» emphasizes the diversity of peoples and their values and the fact that they do not understand one another, he says: «A tablet of good hangs over every people. Behold, it is the tablet of their overcomings; behold, it is the voice of their will to power.» (170) We all live according to some values or a value-system, even if no value-system is eternal and it is constantly recreated as overcoming of one generation over the previous one. This is how human power ultimately manifests itself; it creates values. In TSZ II, «Self-Overcoming,» Zarathustra engages in a polemic with the wisest, especially with the philosophers of the past, since the section starts with «will to truth» with which Nietzsche usually refers to the philosopher’s unconditional desire to attain and possess truth: «The will to truth which will still tempt us to many a venture, that famous truthfulness of which all philosophers so far have spoken with respect — what questions has this will to truth laid before us! What strange, wicked, questionable questions!» (BGE §1).

For Zarathustra, the people are like the river which carries the bark on which their valuations sit; they are the carriers of the philosophers’ values, what they believe to be good and evil, that is, their customs and valuations, reveals an ancient will to power, the will to power of the philosophers of the past. Now the people will always carry the bark, because people always live

under or with values. What is at stake, for the wisest, is the will to power, that is, the will to power will always create and recreate values which will reign supreme. Speaking to the wisest and presenting to them his teaching on values (or «good and evil»), Zarathustra goes on to say what he learned from life and the living. The following points can be extrapolated from his teaching on life and the living:

- «Whatever lives, obeys.» (TSZ «On the Thousand and One Goals»). The word ‘obey’ is usually understood within the context of human relationships, but Nietzsche’s understanding is far broader. We are always bound by something higher than us, whether they are the cosmological laws of creation and destruction, values which shape our being, or human-beings who embody them. Moreover, there is obedience of some forces to others within the same individual.

- «He who cannot obey himself is commanded. That is the nature of the living.» (TSZ «On the Thousand and One Goals»). Obeying oneself is related to the Apollinian wisdom of knowing oneself, which runs through Nietzsche works from *The Birth of Tragedy* to *Ecce Homo* («become who you are»). Those who do not give values to themselves or who do recreate their lives are commanded by others (others give meanings to their lives). Or those who do not master themselves or who do not set limits will be limited by others (external factors).

- «Commanding is harder than obeying...because he who commands must carry the burden of all who obey and because this burden may easily crush him.» (TSZ «On the Thousand and One Goals»). It is one thing to be a law to oneself, but another to be a law to others. Interaction with people has its dangers, especially with the mob or the multitude which makes bonds based on herd instinct.

Commanding and obeying, together with resistance and affect, are terms Nietzsche uses to explain power relations, since we are almost always in power, therefore, in power relations. There are power relations within and without, but one must understand first how forces immanently work. Commanding and obeying are to be seen as monadological forces of the self: «Because in a given case we are simultaneously the commanders and the obeyers...» (WLN 36). Obedience and commanding are forms of struggle, affect is impact or influence and wherever there is power, there is affect. «...will to power is the primitive form of affect, that all other affects are just elaborations of it...» (WLN 256). In the human world, for instance, anything that is human has affects, from feelings of pleasure and pain to desires and passions (BGE §36). These passions form the inner workings of all organisms, their inner

dynamics, so to speak. If we can give a name to their unity, then it would be called «will to power.» «...suppose all organic functions could be traced back to this will to power and one could also find in it the solution of the problem of procreation and nourishment—it is *one* problem—then one would have gained the right to determine *all* efficient force univocally as—*will to power.*» (BGE §36) If one could look at the phenomena from within, the unity of their inner workings would be called «the will to power;» that is, the sum-total of all their affects. But we can never know fully what all the inner affects are in a given context. A genealogist can approach these inner forces to the extent that they can be interpreted with insights and slow readings. Nietzsche, however, is proposing a term which exceeds the experience of knowledge.

## 2. POWER, ARTS, AND THE BODY: PHYSIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

In any discussion of art and artistic power in Nietzsche, one needs to consider the role of drives and desire, all the physiological functions, and the question of disinterestedness. This is one reason why Nietzsche takes Kantian aesthetics to task and disagrees with the notion of disinterestedness: «[...] “that is beautiful,” said Kant, “which gives us pleasure *without interest.*” Without interest! Compare with this definition one framed by...Stendhal...» (GM, Third Essay §6). Although Kant explains the disinterestedness for how the faculties of the mind function, carving a role for Imagination, he dismisses the physiological aspects of aesthetic experience, those of desire and emotions, for instance. In this sense, Nietzsche sees in Kantian aesthetics a lapse back into generalization and universalization despite Kant’s insistence on the singular nature of aesthetic judgment. The problem of physiologically devoid disinterestedness does not pertain only to aesthetics, but to an overall emaciation and related weak emotive states such as pity and altruism, as Pothen rightly observes: «Disinterestedness leads not only to the ‘emasculat[i]on of art,’ but corresponds to the ‘charm and sugar in these feelings of “for others”, “not for myself”», writes Nietzsche. «The ‘good conscience’ to which morality, as well as an art supported by disinterestedness, aspires is one of many ‘seductions’ that the prescriptiveness and universality of our ethical and aesthetic concepts inevitably leads us.» (2002, 154). Again, the problem is not so much that Kant reveals the workings of the mind as that his aesthetics relies on the denial of the body, hence suffers from ascetic idealism. Again as Pothen notes, Kantian aesthetics stands for «[...] a denial of the body and a denial of life.» (2002, 156).

Nietzsche’s critical remarks on the moralities of the past, those universalizing, prescriptive moralities, or morality of good and evil to be specific, reveal how various affects were not considered by them, therefore their powers remained hidden or suppressed, or sublimated into other domains

or given free rein (BGE §198). His teachings on power reveal the duplicity and deficiency in these old moralities. What follows we will expand on his teachings from the standpoint of life and strength. Wherever there is the living, there is will to power. Even those who serve, there is the will to be master. Anything that lives desires to rule (not only in the political sense, but in the broader sense of being dominant), in whatever context or constellation. Here power is associated with a desire to be master. There are dominant drives and emotions in every human being, which exert power and shape their being.

Furthermore, there is a chain of hierarchy from the stronger to the weaker with degrees of power, which separate them: «the weaker should serve the stronger...which would be master over what is weaker still...» Two points can be made about hierarchy here: a) The theme of degrees and quantum of power appear in Nietzsche's notes. In WP §§55-6, Nietzsche shows how morality «...taught men to hate and despise...the basic character trait of those who rule: their will to power» whereas there is only degrees of power since we are all in power and power relationship. «There is nothing to life that has value, except the degree of power—assuming that life itself is the will to power.» (WP §55-7) The idea of more power or enhancement of power appears in the notes of WP: growth itself as a desire to be more (§564), the measure of power in relation to the form, force and constraints it acts or resists (§568). The power differential stemming from various degrees or quanta of power also appears frequently in these notes: the antagonism in the degree of power (between the weak and the strong) in different natures (WP §585, 317), the degree of resistance and the degree of superior power and the effect of quantum of power (WP §634) and so on, b) the question of hierarchy has a central place in Nietzsche's thought, but one must start with the hierarchy within oneself, as part of the priority of self-knowledge and «amor fati,» then proceed to other forms of hierarchy (BGE §257). The weak betray a specific type of hierarchy, as they steal power in sly, stealthy or secretive ways. This is one of the meanings of the weak in Nietzsche: that the weak is sly, neither direct nor open. This is manifest, for example, in pitying or the pitied, the altruist, the beggar and the ascetic who exercise power by posing as powerless or by a way of a problematic relationship to power (see BGE §51).

As for life itself, its secret is to be found in overcoming: «I am that which must always overcome itself.» Life is overcoming, human is something that which has to be overcome towards the overhuman, this is Zarathustra's teaching. That life is a strife to create something higher, farther and more manifold, to be the life we are is to be the manifold, the multiplicity we are and strive higher, these are the teachings of life. To know and accept what we are thrown into (the meaning of 'amor fati'), but, at the same time, to make that one's own and to recreate oneself out of this thrownness. Even if

one finds oneself in decadence, to gradually remold one's self into a higher self or even if one is thrown into a great culture, to recreate this greatness in one's own life: in either case, there is strife and a creative activity, and life is an on-going creative activity (Nietzsche offers, at least, two models for self-transformation: the preservation-creation-destruction model of the second *Untimely Meditation* within the context of the notion of the historical and the camel-lion-child model of *Zarathustra I* within the context of overcoming of human towards the overhuman).

And more on life: Life is oppositional: «Whatever I create and however much I love it—soon I must oppose it and my love; thus my will wills it.» In order to recreate oneself, one must oppose to a part of oneself in order to overcome it. Opposition is the fuel for overcoming. Where there is no opposition, there is no change, only stagnation, no ekstasis but only stasis. But life itself is change and flow. The idea of opposition and resistance is a recurring theme in Nietzsche's philosophy: «The will to power can manifest itself only against resistances; therefore, it seeks that which resists it...» (WP §656). The biological example here which may lend itself to a Darwinistic reading can be misleading, but, according to Nietzsche, we are not only the nature that we are, but what we make ourselves to be, that is, the interpretive being while accepting our embodiment in animal/natural being. So, the question would be how to understand such terms as appropriation and assimilation within the context of our value schemes and the idea of opposition. And further in the same paragraph: «And you too, lover of knowledge [the knowing ones], are only a path and footprint of my will; verily, my will to power walks [or wanders] also on the heels [feet] of your will to truth.» We need knowledge, but it is only a path among many other paths, and truth always goes with power, that is, truth which is not empowered does not become truth (WP §534). Again in WP §517, what philosophers have called truth is presented, and, in WP §749, the seductiveness of truth is accepted, but it is also repudiated. These are some polemical remarks targeted at the philosophers of the past, who took truth as eternal, unconditional, absolute, and objective, not created by them, but somehow empowering itself. But, in fact, they empowered their truth, (morals, values, etc.) by providing a rational foundation for it (see BGE §186). In this aphorism Nietzsche shows the difficulty of such a philosophical attempt. WP §749 and BGE §211 are revealing in terms of Nietzsche's prospective notion of philosophy (and wherever we see «the new philosophers» or «the philosophers of the future» and their echoes).

Life teaches the will to power, not the will to life nor the will to existence (terms borrowed from Schopenhauer, and there is an implicit polemic with his ideas here). This is the end of the teachings of life; after this Zarathustra adds two more points which are somehow implied above but which are



explicitly about values: First, values are transitory: «[...] good and evil that are not transitory, do not exist...they must overcome themselves again and again...» Second, to create values, one must destroy values: «And whoever must be a creator in good and evil, verily, he must be an annihilator and break values.» Both of these points on value apply to emotions as well. Emotions are transitory, both in the collective and the emotional sense. And one must destroy problem emotions for higher, stronger emotions.

Up to now, we have discussed some of the formulations of the feeling of and will to power in Nietzsche's writings. I will now summarize some of the points made so far: first, power and value are closely linked, they imply one another. Within the context of emotions, what emotions are valued in culture and how they leave their affects in that culture? Second, what power is taught by life, there is a dynamic connection between life and power as Nietzsche shows it elsewhere: «life itself is *will to power*» (BGE §13), the context here is the problematic of self-preservation and the connection to nature and animality. Is our pathos of power rooted in our psycho-somatic functions and in the animal human? If so, we will be in close touch with our emotive world.<sup>1</sup> Third, there is a hierarchy of power structures, which is described in terms of obeying and commanding. One can apply this to the individual and understand the hierarchy from within the individual (the 'it' in the text refers to the living), especially since Nietzsche's philosophy speaks to the individual and power over oneself is of utmost importance (WP §802). There is a hierarchy of emotions in individuals and cultures; no doubt, every value scheme presupposes its own hierarchy. Fourth, power, especially in the lateral axis, is overcoming, struggle, and opposition; power has an agonistic aspect.

Furthermore, in *Beyond Good and Evil* §23 Nietzsche claims to establish the will to power as a unique doctrine: «To understand it [psychology] as morphology and *the doctrine of the development of the will to power*, as I do...» The translation here can be misleading, the original text has: «Morphologie und Entwicklungslehre des Willens zur Macht,» the second part would translate as «developmental teaching of the will to power.» Moral prejudices, Nietzsche says, have prevented even those of the spiritual world from penetrating into this area, now the path is open to the psychologists and to physiologists.

1 Although this book explores human emotions, there is much to learn from animals including how they feel. For instance, animals experience fear and suffering differently than humans. For an in-depth discussion of the place of animals in Nietzsche, see Vanessa Lemm's *Nietzsche's Animal Philosophy*, and for the animal symbolism in Nietzsche's works, the anthology, *A Nietzschean Bestiary*. In this anthology there are interesting observations on specific animals and their emotive associations in Nietzsche; for instance, Charles Taylor makes note the camel in *Zarathustra* and how it embodies *Ehrfurcht*, translated as 'respect and awe.'



If we were to explain «our entire instinctive life as the development and ramification of *one* basic form of the will,» which Nietzsche suggests experimentally and hypothetically in *Beyond Good and Evil*, Aphorism 36, then we would be able «to determine *all* efficient force univocally as *will to power*.» In this statement and many others such as «the world viewed from inside...would be “will to power” and nothing else» (BGE §36) and «[...] in a world whose essence is will to power» (BGE §186), Nietzsche is searching experimentally to find an integral place for all human instincts and drives, refer to that place as the will to power and then explain other human activities in terms of this will to power. In a way, the teaching of will to power can be seen as the philosopher’s cautious effort to gather the pieces together (the construction phase) as opposed to his efforts to undermine and dismantle (the demolition phase). Nietzsche is aware of the danger of giving a name to the multiplicity of human instincts and drives, he does not want to fall into the traps of stagnant monism. We see the signs of caution everywhere; the teaching is called a developmental teaching. He is doing an experiment.

### 3. ART, CREATIVITY AND CONSCIOUS VS. UNCONSCIOUS FORCES

There is an unconscious, inner, and a deeper aspect of power and its manifestation, which Nietzsche holds against the old moralities. For him, this aspect is the starting point—power and its manifestation are integral, that is, they cannot be separated just as Nietzsche is opposed to the separation of being and appearance, which is prevalent in Western philosophy since Plato. «The victorious concept “force,” by means of which our physicists have created God and the world, still needs to be completed: an inner will must be ascribed to it, which I designate as “will to power,” i.e. as an insatiable desire to manifest power; or as the employment and exercise of power, as a creative drive, etc.» (WP §619) There are inner conditions for the exercise of power, these inner conditions can be looked for in the constellation of drives and instincts, in the soul, in the background of our actions. There are both somatic and psychic dimensions to this background. The somatic aspect deals with the organic processes and the functions of the organs (WP §644, §652), the instincts and the drives, and the psychic aspect with the unconscious forces, although with the unconscious Nietzsche sometimes refers to the instincts in the background, suggesting a psycho-somatology. The polemic in WP §707 against the philosophers of consciousness is one among many: «The “conscious world” cannot serve as a starting point for values: need for an “*objective*” positing of values.» Life forces and power, according to Nietzsche, are prior to the conscious world of feelings, intentions and valuations (similar argument is raised in WP §674).

As I suggested earlier, there is a semantic problem here which shows itself in the conflict between will, which implies consciousness as the faculty of conscious choosing, and unconsciousness. In the absence of a better term, Nietzsche uses the Schopenhauerian linguistic construct which does not fit well with his doctrine, because the will to power has to do primarily with the unconscious as we have seen above, and secondarily with the conscious. This difficulty did not escape Nietzsche's attention; in some texts, he does say that the will does not exist (as in WP §692, for instance): «My proposition is: that the will of psychology hitherto is an unjustified generalization, that this will *does not exist at all...*» That Nietzsche refers to a multiplicity of issues with the term will to power can be seen in the way he himself struggles with it; it is a teaching or a doctrine, not only a term, which is an important part of his philosophy of power. Stambaugh solves this problem by suggesting that «in the will to power it is not a question of a "will" that has an effect on a substratum "force." The will to power expresses itself in the *interpretation*, in the *kind of consumption of force...*» After showing how space, force and power are related, she concludes: «Power is the use of power, the consumption of power, and nothing else» (1987, 160).

### 3. POWER, VALUE, AND THE PROBLEM OF MONISM

Let us now turn to the question of a possible monism in Nietzsche's teaching of will to power. Monism claims that all are one, Being simply is, and monistic thought is traced back to Parmenides. But, at the same time, all are in flux as Heraclitus says, all is multiplicity, there is nothing permanent, permanence is a human illusion. How can the two thoughts be brought together? Being and becoming, the old dichotomy since the Greeks, since Heraclitus and Parmenides. In Nietzsche's thought being and becoming are inseparable, if we are allowed to use these terms. Being has come down to the earth and becoming is now elevated. This thought is expressed in the idea of the eternal return: «That *everything recurs* is the closest *approximation of a world of becoming to a world of being*:—high point of the meditation.» (WP §617) In the beginning of this section, Nietzsche interjects his will to power into being and becoming: «To impose upon becoming the character of being—that is the supreme will to power.» Now what could this mean? And how can we explain the eternal return and the will to power together?

For us humans, to impose the character of being, that is, a semblance of permanence in the midst of change, upon becoming is reflected in the way we relate to existence, in the way we create our relationship with existence, or in the way we find ourselves in the universe. All of these, moreover, are related to values and value-making understood in their unconscious and conscious aspects. This statement can be read both retrospectively and prospectively;

that is, all value-creation does this imposition. But the mode of value-creation Nietzsche suggests is not the same as what has existed hitherto. There is no eternal being in Nietzsche's thought, which is unchanging, which is beyond here and now, which is ontologically different from becoming and which, as such, is the ground of all existence. On the contrary, for Nietzsche being is becoming, and becoming is being. This thought is encapsulated in the idea of eternal return, which is, first and foremost, the main thrust of his cosmology (with its manifestations in different areas of human existence), and his fundamental teaching. In this and other ways, Nietzsche's teachings on power and the eternal return are brought together.

Insofar as the will to power manifests itself in value-making, which we see in such expressions as the will to power as knowledge or the will to power as art, one way of bringing the will to power and the eternal return together is by pointing out the possibility of creating values and empowering them in accordance with the eternal return. We have already discussed the immanent association between power and value in *Zarathustra* and in his notes from the same period Nietzsche talks about perspectival valuation, as he expands on his idea of perspectivism (WP §481, §556, §636) which is implicitly present throughout his philosophy; especially in his insight that our relationship to existence is primarily that of interpretation. He considers the static notions of old philosophy such as «thing-in-itself» and «wisdom» as hostile to perspective valuations: «Wisdom as the attempt to get beyond perspective valuations (i.e. beyond the “will to power”): a principle hostile to life and decadent, a symptom among the Indians, etc., of the weakening of the power of appropriation.» (WP §608) For Nietzsche, the power of appropriation, making something one's own, is the power of creativity, any decline in the former would result in a decline in the latter.

What is at stake for Nietzsche regarding value and power is the separation between the two as though one could stand above and beyond oneself, one's value and power schemes and appraise being itself; this is his polemic against old philosophers, directed especially against Socrates: «To appraise being itself! But this appraisal itself is still this being!—and if we say no, we still do what we *are*.» (WP §675) That being and doing cannot be separated and that the power one is and one manifests are integrally whole in Nietzsche were discussed before. Here in this section, he explains this in terms of the doer and the deed and demands that one should take the doer back into the deed. One reading of this passage is that the doer's inner world soul is immanently tied to his/her actions; that is, the will to power of the drives and instincts, the states of the body and the soul are integrally linked to what one does, how that inner will to power manifests itself outwardly, what comes out as the doer's purposes, aims, intentions, meanings, etc.

Perspectival valuation or interpretation is how humans manifest their power, their inner will to power. It is in this context that Nietzsche considers interpretation as a form of the will to power (WP §556) and all valuations as interpretations (WP §589), that is, it exists as an affect; with our value-schemes, with our valuation, we manifest our power and create impacts. Which one comes first, power or value/interpretation? Although Nietzsche suggests that they imply one another, he strongly insists on the priority of power: «[...] every strengthening and increase of power opens up new perspectives and means believing in new horizons...» (WP §616) In this section, he sums up some of the important suppositions of his philosophy.

Again, in another note, Nietzsche writes: «The will to power *interprets*... it defines limits, determines degrees, variations of power» (WP §643). Here he also talks about the power of interpretation, interpretation as a means of becoming master of something. Every interpretation of the world wants to become the master, the ruling drive. Human existence is complex and multifaceted; Nietzsche often talks about various forces of human existence from art and religion to science and philosophy. The domination of one over the others shapes the world-interpretation in a specific cultural context. In a note (WP §677), Nietzsche lists the artistic, scientific, religious, and moral interpretations of the world; respectively, they are the power of creativity, the power of knowledge, spiritual powers, and the power of customs and traditions. He states that what is common to all of these interpretations or their drives is that they want to be viewed as the highest courts of value, they either oppose or subject each other (join together synthetically or alternate in dominating.) It is in this context that Nietzsche raises his criticism against Socratic rationality and its influence on Western world-interpretation. Just as the rule of the one in general, or the rule of the one drive, is problematic from a Nietzschean standpoint, the rule of one such force is also problematic since a culture needs all of these forces and an agonistic balance between them. Such an alliance between forces or drives is also considered by Nietzsche.

Power relationship is a term which appears in his notes from Nachlass, «Machtbeziehung»<sup>2</sup> in the original (WP §630 and §631). With this term, Nietzsche implies the internal dynamics of power. In this regard one may consider the relationship between stronger and weaker powers, the degree of independence, and the struggle between two elements of unequal power. That we are almost always in power relations is suggested here and that we are

2 For Foucault power is almost always power relation. He takes Nietzsche's critique in the direction of institutional practices and focuses on how forms or regimes of power enter into relations with bodies of knowledge and truth regimes in specific historic contexts, especially in *Discipline & Punish*. My interest in power in this book is where we are in power relations in specific, historic value schemes.

more or less powerful in any power dynamics are clear from these passages. A complex of power and power relations sustains the existing morals, interpretations, and perspectives until a new complex is born (WP §730). In power relations, one body leaves its impact another, whatever this impact may be. This is brought up by Nietzsche under the notion of affect.

Affect is the influence something creates on something else. It is a concept which was first developed by Spinoza. «[...] the will to power is the primitive form of affect, that all other affects are only developments of it...» Life is power, whatever has life has affect, the will to power even in its most rudimentary form has affect; going back to the earlier comments on the will to power, we can say that the organs, the drives, the instincts and also the psychic functions have affects; all other affects develop out of these rudimentary affects.

#### 4. THE NOTION OF PLASTICITY

The word 'plastic' comes from the Greek word 'plastein' which means 'to mold.' In *The Birth of Tragedy* Nietzsche uses the term in association with visual arts, as in painting and sculpture, , and also with the Apollonian. In his following works, specifically in the second *Untimely Meditation, On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*, Nietzsche uses it in a wider cultural context. It must be noted that plasticity is often associated with visual and plastic arts, as it first connotes a physical action in a physical medium. However, Nietzsche, as he does with many words, uses 'plastic' and its derivatives in broader contexts. For him, plasticity lies at the core of self-transformation, as he turns this notion from visual culture into his philosophy of self-making, which can be construed as strategies to expose oneself to adverse forces so as to transform oneself to higher realms through plastic powers.

The plastic powers are necessary for cultural transformation: «I mean by plastic power the capacity to develop out of oneself in one's own way, to transform and incorporate into oneself what is past and foreign, to heal wounds, to replace what has been lost, to recreate broken molds.» (UM I-1, 62). He goes on to say that there are those who lack this power and they will perish at the slightest wound; on the other hand, those who have it will stand firm in the worst disasters. Nietzsche presents the notion of plastic power within the context of his historiography the core ideas which are based on two sets of three notions: First, the set of the historical, the unhistorical and the supra-historical; and second, the set of the antiquarian, the monumental and the critical. One must be able to forget (the unhistorical) as much as one remembers (the historical) based on a strong, long-sighted vision (the supra-historical) and one must re-create great works (monumental) as one preserves (antiquarian) and destroys (critical). Clearly, plastic powers, the power of

molding, works in both layers of self-transformation through 'history.' What disturbs the forces of culture is the excess of history, historic consciousness, and knowledge. These excesses prevent self-transformation at different levels: first, it binds people to their status quo, including its problems; second, it focuses on knowledge alone to the neglect of the power of creation and action, or «artistic power.» The problem of history can be healed through the development of the unhistorical and the supra-historical, as Nietzsche reminds youth at the end of his essay; «history» must be for life and life forces, as artistic/plastic powers interpret history for life.

Nietzsche's description of the plastic power is similar to the artistic process and how an artist is in constant flux in that process. There are stops on the way and boundaries, but these do not remain fixed. No doubt, a context is needed to show the work of art. What makes the process fluid and rich are the acts of assimilation and appropriation, as Nietzsche presents it: «The stronger the innermost roots of a man's nature, the more readily will he be able to assimilate and appropriate the things of the past...» (UM II-1, 62-63). Ancient Greeks assimilated and appropriated much from their neighboring cultures, including myths, cults, architecture, column and temple making, sciences (math and astronomy), and calendar systems and yet they gave them their own shape and stamp. In short, they had a strong plastic power, which one detects in their art works. In a note from the *Nachlass*, Nietzsche presents Aeschylus as an example of a total artist with such plastic powers:

The tragedian must certainly have given instructions for the plastic groups and movements of his actors: and we can see that he did this from the symmetry of the verse numbers, which can only be made clear by plastic movements. In general, the actor stands while he speaks: he separates equal groups of verses by individual steps. In any case, his entire demeanor falls under the concept of orchestration, and the chorus teacher, i.e. originally the poet, had to think up and prescribe everything for him too. For the Aeschylean era, which was used to a strictly hieratic style, we will often have to assume a hieratic style in tragedy too. The task would therefore be to understand Aeschylus as a plastic composer, both in the plastic movement of an individual scene and in the overall sequence of plastic compositions in the entire work of art. The main problem would be to understand the plastic use of the chorus, its relationship to the stage characters, and then the relationship of the plastic group to the surrounding architecture. Here an abyss of artistic powers opens up before us — and the dramatist appears more than ever as the total artist. (KSA 7, 570).

Without a doubt horizons and boundaries are needed to be able to create, although there are no fixed, eternal boundaries. «[...] and the most powerful and tremendous nature would be characterized by the fact that it would know no boundary at all at which the historical sense began to overwhelm it; it would

draw to itself and incorporate into itself all the past, its own and that most foreign to it, and as it were transform it into blood.» (UM II-1, 63). Nietzsche's description reads like a physiological process, analogous to how stomach and other digestive organs process food, familiar or unfamiliar, absorbs and processes what is good for the body. We must, however, be cautious in drawing such parallels, as the 'body' of culture is not the same as the organic body. To be healthy, strong and fruitful, Nietzsche repeats, one must be bounded by a horizon. There must be boundaries, though fluid, in and through which such re-creation happens, as one remembers at the right time and forgets at the right time. In the ancient world, cults provided bounded horizons and the contexts for such self-transformation from which ancient artists like Aeschylus could draw their sources and inspiration for their creative deeds.

For artistic powers to flourish, it is not sufficient to have a body of knowledge and information, however immense that body may be, as is the case today with online sources of information. What is needed is a culture with plastic powers in its arsenal. It is through these powers that a culture places all its forces at the service of the present and the future; otherwise, a body of knowledge, however immense, can also annihilate life, as we have seen in the wars of the last centuries. In his second *Untimely Meditation*, Nietzsche extends his critique of logocentricity or the Alexandrian culture by way of Socrates, which he presents in *The Birth of Tragedy*, to a different context, the context of historiography in the 19<sup>th</sup> century: «These are the services history is capable of performing for life; every man and every nation requires, in accordance with its goals, energies and needs, a certain kind of knowledge of the past, now in the form of monumental, now of antiquarian, now of critical history: *but it does not require it as a host of pure thinkers who only look on at life, of knowledge-thirsty individuals whom knowledge alone will satisfy and to whom the accumulation of knowledge is itself the goal...*» (UM II-4, 77, emphasis is mine). Human-beings are not just walking encyclopedias and knowledge is not sufficient to build a robust life and culture. While a degree of information and knowledge is necessary, what is of utmost importance is how they fit with schemes and strategies of re-creation. Nietzsche created a contrast here between the Alexandrian culture of knowledge and plastic powers. But the more specific contrast lies between «the malady of history»—and there is a close relationship between the Alexandrian culture and the malady of history— and plastic powers, as he states in the last section of the second *Untimely Meditation*. Referring to youth and life, he writes: «...it is suffering from the *malady of history*. Excess of history has attacked life's plastic powers, it no longer knows how to employ the past as a nourishing food...» (UM II-10, 120). He continues with proposing remedies for this malady. As is typical for Nietzsche as a physician of culture, he offers both diagnosis, prognosis,



and remedies. Here his remedies are the unhistorical and the supra-historical, placed next to or in agonistic opposition to the historical, so as to empower plastic forces in a new constellation of *art*, *religion* and *science*. No doubt, these remedies must be construed strategically in the concrete based on their own cultural contexts.

## 5. EPILOGUE

Power is elusive and often invisible, but yet is always present. As Foucault has amply shown in his works, but most notably in his *Discipline & Punish*, we are almost always in power relations. The phenomenon of power and its workings have escaped many sharp thinkers up to Nietzsche. This evasion of the question of power needs its own study, but that was not our aim here. In attempting to understand the workings of power, many people, thinkers and others, jump to its immediate manifestations, as in political power for instance, and either demonize or banalize it or avoid its discussion. Nietzsche is the first major thinker to unravel power and its affective dynamics that are rooted in psycho-somatic forces, those forces that are at work not only in every aspect of life but also in the artistic creation. Most importantly, Nietzsche exposed the workings of artistic power, which has evaded many of his readers. In the manifestation of artistic power, as a singular being thrown into this universe, one is faced with the singular nature of existence and its optimal power ‘gestalt’ namely active power. As Nietzsche has shown in *On the Genealogy of Morals* and Deleuze expounded (specifically in *Nietzsche & Philosophy*), reactive force or power is an anomaly that has developed in the civilizing process, pervasive in monotheism and its metaphysical off-shoots. The ‘optimal’ form of power is active power which lies at the root of aesthetic justification of the world. This is not to say that art and artists cannot be subject to or serve reactive forms of power—much of such subservience or subjugation has been seen in history, but rather to state that art autochthonously operates in active power. The problem of power and artistic power has become ever more significant in today’s world in the face of expanding and evasive forms of reactive and disciplinary forms of technological power. For different reasons, for domination and oppression on the part of technocrats and patriarchal, autocratic structures or for expediency on the part of the many, reactive forms of technological power globally permeated all walks of life. Such systems can be resisted and combatted through arts, its power of creation, and plasticity in the face of such alienation. Nietzsche’s teachings, though cannot be followed verbatim, which would go against the spirit of his thought, can be appropriated based on the artistic and plastic needs of our times. In this way, one can respond to today’s global crisis.

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